Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

What's your level of optimism for 2008?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Times Square

New Year's Eve revelers converged on Times Square to watch the dropping of a new energy-efficient ball.

NATION...Page 14

Bocaue Fire

A fire Monday destroyed nine firecracker stalls north of Manila, injuring at least three people.

ASIA...Page 15

New Year

Across the globe, people gathered for parties, shot off fireworks and held out hopes for a peaceful and prosperous 2008.

WORLD...Page 16

Electric fuel rates remain at highest ever. **PAGE 2**

2007 economic census begins in CNMI. **PAGE 5**

FIRE IN THE SKY JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

As seen from Garapan Fishing Base, Saipan's skyline comes alive with exploding fireworks after the clock struck midnight to signal the start of the new year. Across the globe, people gathered for parties, shot off fireworks and held out hopes for a prosperous 2008.

'Many still oppose federalization'

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Fitial

The Fitial administration says Washington, D.C. should give weight to the opinion of the vast majority of locals opposed to immigration federalization.

See MANY on Page 4

Sleep disruptions may up diabetes risk

By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID
AP SCIENCE WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—When Shakespeare called sleep the "chief nourisher of life's feast," he may have been well ahead of his time, medically at least. Researchers at the University of Chicago Medical Center report that disrupting sleep damages the body's ability to regulate blood sugar levels, potentially raising

ON THE NET

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences: http://www.pnas.org

See SLEEP on Page 4

NEW YEAR'S DAY MISHAPS

Car slams into pole, 3 hurt by fireworks

A man was hurt when a car he was driving ran off the road and slammed into an electric power pole along Tun Joaquin Doi Road in Fina Sisu on New Year's Day. At least three other persons were brought to the hospital for fireworks-

See CAR on Page 4

A CUC personnel secures the area where a white Hyundai sedan slammed into the power pole in front of the Korean Evangelical Holiness Church along Tun Joaquin Doi Road in Fina Sisu on New Year's Day.
JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

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Local

Electric fuel rates remain at highest ever

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

CNMI residents and businesses should continue conserving electricity as the January electric fuel rates remain at the highest ever level of 25.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has been implementing the 25.8 cents per kWh rate since October 2007 pursuant to the emergency regulations adopted by Gov. Benigno R. Fitial on Nov. 9.

CUC said the reason for such high power rates is the price of fuel, which remains very high.

Under the January electric fuel rates, the rates for residential customers will be 25.8 cents per kWh for the first 1,000 kWh and 30.2 cents per kWh for over 1,000 kWh. On top of that, households will be paying a fixed rate of $3.50 in customer charges per month.

With respect to businesses, these customers will be paying the fixed 8.6 cents for electric non-fuel rate and 25.8 cents for electric fuel rate for a total of 34.4 cents for all kWh billed. In addition, businesses will be assessed a fixed monthly customer charges of $7.67.

For government agencies, they will be charged 9.1 cents for electric non-fuel rate and 25.8 cents for electric fuel rate, for a total of 34.9 cents for all kWh billed. Government agencies are also paying additional monthly customer charges of $7.67.

For non-conforming loads, they will be paying 22.2 cents electric non-fuel rate and 25.8 cents electric fuel rate, for a total of 48 cents for all kWh billed. On top of it, they will be assessed a fixed monthly customer charge of $56.

Residential customers experienced the lowest fuel rates only in October 2007 when Public Law 15-94 took effect, putting a cap on residential user rates at 17.6 cents per kWh.

With the administration's signing of emergency regulations on Nov. 9, the electric fuel rates for residential customers jumped from 17.6 cents per kWh to the highest ever, 25.8 cents per kWh.

NEW YEAR FUN JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ
Japanese tourists frolic on the pristine Micro Beach late afternoon yesterday.

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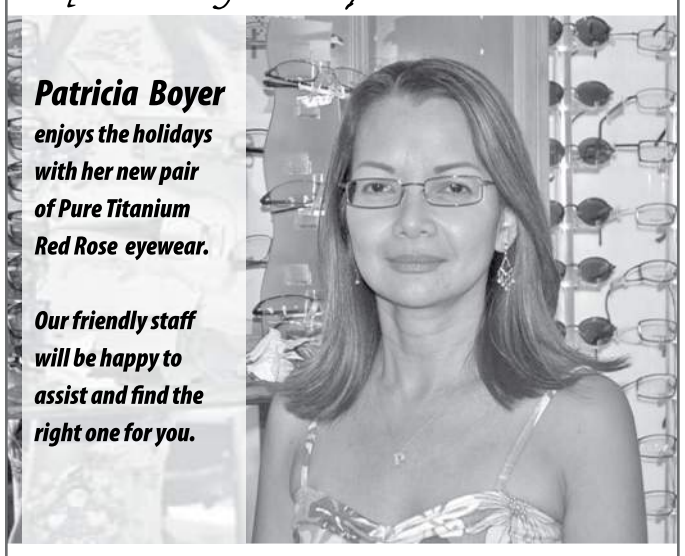

Patricia Boyer enjoys the holidays with her new pair of Pure Titanium Red Rose eyewear.

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Daycares: We have no objection to transfer

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

A large number of daycare centers in the CNMI say they have no objection to the transfer of the childcare program to the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Lelina Torres, owner of Children's World Daycare & Learning Center, said she has no problem as to which agency would take over the program, so long as the services that were provided by PSS continues at the newly designated agency.

Torres cited two major concerns: the timeliness of monthly payments and the monthly training required under the childcare program.

"The timeliness of monthly payment is a concern because majority of the daycares in the CNMI employ contract workers and we really don't want to have any problems with either the Department of Labor or the Department of Immigration," Torres said.

The second concern, according to Torres, is a once or twice a month training for childcare providers. "The daycares need to be up-to-date with everything. We're dealing with children," she said.

Since Children's World has been under the PSS childcare program, Torres said PSS has been living up to its duties.

"We've had our ups and our downs, but nothing huge. As far as the timeliness of payments and training, PSS has been very much up-to-date," Torres said.

Since this will be the first time for the CNMI childcare program to be transferred, Torres hopes things will continue the way they have. "No matter the agency that will take over."

Lisa San Nicholas, owner of Gospel Light Daycare, said that she too has no problem with the transfer.

She pointed out, though, that PSS has been accommodating to the daycare's needs. "They even check up on us from time-to-time," she added.

Although San Nicholas thinks the transfer as "something new," she says she is not objecting to it. As a matter fact, "I have no problem with it."

According to press secretary Charles P. Reyes Jr., "The governor was well within his program authority to render the decision and the decision has already been largely accepted by nearly all of the parties as a matter of course."

Education Commissioner David Borja had also expressed support for the decision "that was made by our leader."

To his understanding, Reyes explained that DCCA will promulgate plan amendments, procedures, and regulations "in conjunction with federal authorities and in co-

See DAYCARES on Page 4

Europe Marian Pilgrimage

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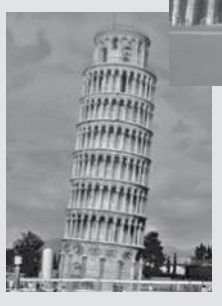

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'Use of cover-over funds legally correct'

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The Fitial administration stands firm on its decision to use recovered cover-over funds to pay tax rebates and refunds.

Press secretary Charles P. Reyes Jr. said the administration is confident its action was correct legally, economically, and morally.

His statement comes after House Minority Leader Arnold I. Palacios questioned the disbursement of the $26.4-million funds from the federal government. Palacios suggested that the funds should have been submitted to the Legislature for appropriation.

"The governor's legal advisers and the OAG have not objected to the decision to release federal cover over money into the hands of individuals and private businesses as tax rebates. We are confident of its legality and if Representative Arnold Palacios has concerns, we invite him to introduce a bill authorizing the Governor to use the money for tax refunds and rebates to correct any possible deficiency he may perceive," Reyes said.

"We believe that most people are happy with this decision and we do not support any group or individual's preference to deny people their tax refunds and rebates, which they have been waiting on for so long," he added.

Reyes also said the Legislature played no role in securing the funds. "This positive development emerged only because of the Fitial administration's efforts. We consider it a major success," he said.

Reyes said that the money was rightfully returned to the taxpayers. He said the private sector can better allocate the resources effectively, compared to the government.

"The Governor is a fiscal conservative and not a tax and spend liberal. If our economy will fully recover, it will be because the government has allowed the private sector to flourish because prosperity comes from the private sector, not government, from free markets, not government bureaucrat," he said.

The administration recently reached a settlement with the U.S. Department of Treasury on the dispute over federal taxes that the U.S. government failed to transfer—or "cover over"—to the local government.

The settlement resulted in the transfer of $26.4 million to the Commonwealth. The entire amount was used to pay outstanding tax refunds and rebates.

Finance Secretary Eloy S. Inos disclosed that the government owes the taxpayers some $34 million in refunds and rebates. He said the balance will be paid with future tax recoveries.

The local government expects to receive $20 million to $40 million more from federal tax claims.

The settled dispute concerned conflicting claims of taxing authority for tax years 2000 to 2002. Under the settlement, the U.S. Treasury agreed that the Commonwealth was the primary taxing authority and abandoned its claims on the $26.4 million of tax revenues.

Group backs Palacios' questions over rebates

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

The TaoTao Tano CNMI Inc. has backed incoming House Speaker Arnold I. Palacios in challenging the governor's constitutional authority when he appropriated $26.4 million in "cover over" money for tax rebates.

Association president Greg Cruz said that, although Gov. Benigno R. Fitial's intent was noble in terms of refunding the public of their long overdue tax refunds, "the question is were the business corporate included in such a rebate or refund?"

In a statement issued last week, Cruz said that Palacios is correct to challenge the issue and that the group is encouraging all members of the legislative body to participate "in this inquisition for the Legislature is the lawmaking and appropriating body before any funds are disbursed or appropriated, especially an amount of this magnitude."

He added that the "behind-closed-doors handling of this 'cover over' rebate by the administration is questionable and must be investigated immediately."

Cruz is urging Lt. Gov. Tim Villagomez to take action and look into this matter and launch an investigation "if a law has been compromised or broken."

According to Cruz, the TaoTao Tano group is concerned that "taxpayers are being used as scapegoats for the mistakes that benefited the administration and left people standing in line and waiting for their checks since last week."

On Dec. 21, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial announced the settlement of the dispute between the U.S. Department of Treasury and the CNMI government over federal taxes that the U.S. government failed to transfer, or cover over, to the local government The settlement resulted in the transfer of $26.4 million to the Commonwealth. Fitial instructed the Department of Finance to use all of the amount to pay outstanding tax refunds and rebates.

Cruz said his group hopes that none of the funds were used to help the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. without the Legislature's approval, "especially with their current financial situation in collection to purchase fuel."

Cruz said they are sending a request for information under the Open Government Act to acquire a listing of the businesses that had received rebates.

"We do not see the logic behind prioritizing business corporate over the common people of the CNMI who are suffering at this point," he added.

DAYCARES

From Page 2

ordination with PSS."

"DCCA will develop the plan and have the relevant federal agency approve the plan and then DCCA will execute the plan or amended program with PSS support until the transition is complete," Reyes added.

No plans have been made to transfer the PSS childcare staff to DCCA.

In addition, "It was our intention to allow PSS to continue with certain parts of the program," Reyes said.

The administration, according to Reyes, looks forward to a smooth program transition to benefit all stakeholders, especially the children and parents.

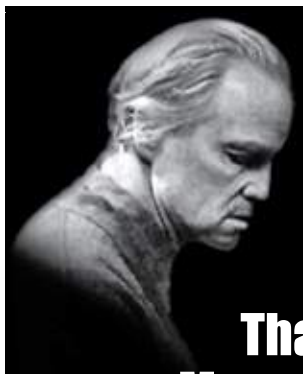
COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

SCHEDULE OF ELECTRIC CHARGES AND RATES FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2008 REMAINS AT - 25.8 CENTS PER KILOWATT - HOUR

CUSTOMER CLASSIFICATIONS	MONTHLY CUSTOMER CHARGES (FIXED)	RATES PER KILOWATT-HOUR (kWh) ELECTRIC NON-FUEL RATES (FIXED)	ELECTRIC FUEL RATES (FLUCTUATES)	TOTAL RATES PER kWh
RESIDENTIAL	$ 3.50			
First 1,000 kWh		Zero	$ 0.258	$ 0.258
Over 1,000 kWh		$ 0.044	$ 0.258	0.302
COMMERCIAL (All kWh Billed)	$ 7.67	$ 0.086	$ 0.258	$ 0.344
GOVERNMENT (All kWh Billed)	$ 7.67	$ 0.091	$ 0.258	$ 0.349
NON-CONFORMING LOAD (All kWh Billed)	$ 56.00	$ 0.222	$ 0.258	$ 0.480

HISTORY OF ELECTRIC FUEL RATES:

AUGUST 2006	$0.215	MAY 2007	$0.222
SEPTEMBER 2006	$0.219	JUNE 2007	$0.221
OCTOBER 2006	$0.194	JULY 2007	$0.223
NOVEMBER 2006	$0.206	AUGUST 2007	$0.223
DECEMBER 2006	$0.206	SEPTEMBER 2007	$0.228
JANUARY 2007	$0.196	OCTOBER 2007 RES	$0.176
FEBRUARY 2007	$0.188	OCTOBER 2007	$0.228
MARCH 2007	$0.188	NOVEMBER 2007	$0.258
APRIL 2007	$0.191	DECEMBER 2007	$0.258



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Request to include aliens in jury denied

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge Ramona Villagomez Manglona has rejected a request to establish procedures to allow aliens legally living on Saipan to be included in the jury pool.

Manglona ruled that the CNMI government's interest in ensuring that members of its juries are full citizens of the United States is of greater importance.

Manglona underscored the need to have full U.S. citizens in the jury pool in her decision that denied defendant Edgardo Macabalo's motion to include non-citizens in the jury array.

The judge, however, noted that Macabalo raises legitimate concerns that the number of citizens compared to the number of noncitizens who presently reside in the local community negatively impacts his right to a jury array that represents a fair cross-section of the community when noncitizens are statutorily excluded from jury service.

Manglona said defendant may rely upon other available means, such as voir dire and challenges for cause, to obtain an impartial jury in the case.

Through voir dire an attorney can challenge a prospective juror "for cause" if that person says or otherwise expresses bias against the attorney's case.

The jury recently found Macabalo guilty of 13 counts of theft for stealing from MarPac Inc. about $120,000 in beer delivery collections. Manglona, however, set aside the jury's verdict and declared Macabalo not guilty, finding the evidence in the case not enough to sustain the guilty verdict.

Manglona

Macabalo is an ethnic Filipino and a citizen of the Philippines. He was employed by Marpac for over 10 years as a nonresident worker and now lives on Saipan as the immediate relative of a U.S. citizen.

Before the trial, he filed a motion to include noncitizens in the jury array, asking the court to establish procedures to allow aliens legally living on Saipan to be included in the jury pool.

Macabalo, through assistant public defender Richard Miller, argues that his right to a fair trial, particularly his right to a trial by an impartial jury drawn from a fair cross-section of the community, requires the inclusion of non-citizens in the jury array when all present circumstances are considered.

In its opposition, the government argues that no legal authority supports the inclusion of non-citizens in the jury array and that the issue of juror qualification presents a political question that should not be determined by the Superior Court.

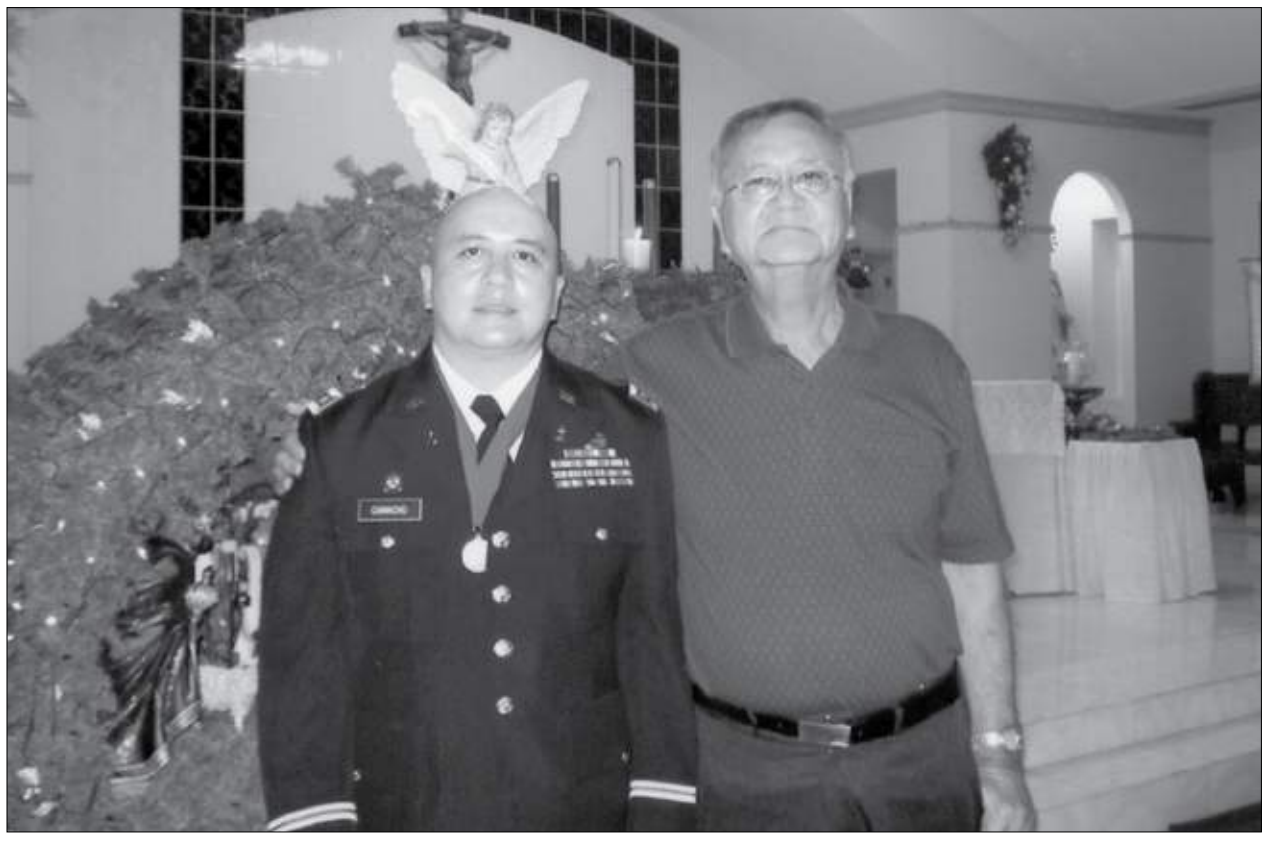
Manglona orally denied the motion.

In her written ruling issued last week, Manglona said that, although the proportionate numbers and distinctive circumstances of noncitizens residing in the local community lend weight to Macabalo's argument to include noncitizens in the jury array, the court is not persuaded that any potential prejudice to his Sixth Amendment right to trial by an impartial jury is sufficient to outweigh the government's substantial interest in maintaining a jury comprising U.S. citizens.

Manglona said that under the previously-cited authority, both the federal and state governments have established that the exclusion of aliens from jury service is justified to serve the important government interest of ensuring that the individuals who are selected to perform the vital function of jurors sufficiently understand and are sufficiently committed to government's laws and institutions to be entrusted with that responsibility.

Manglona, however, rejected the government's argument that the issue that presents a nonjusticiable political question is untenable.

"The fact that the right to a jury trial in the Commonwealth has been granted by a decision of the Legislature provides no basis for assuming that the right, once conferred, carries no less than the full guarantees of fairness provided by the NMI Constitution," Manglona said.



CHRISTMAS VACATION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Maj. Lawrence F. Camacho poses with his father, Luis Camacho, after the Mass on Dec. 24, 2007, in San Roque. He will be on the island until Jan. 6, 2008. Camacho is stationed in South Korea.

SLEEP

From Page 1

the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

More than 18 million Americans have diabetes and the most common form is type 2, in which the body either becomes resistant to insulin or doesn't produce enough of it to regulate sugar in the bloodstream.

In a small experiment, researchers led by Dr. Esra Tasali, an assistant professor of medicine, found that disrupting the deepest sleep periods of volunteers rapidly resulted in reduction in their ability to regulate blood-sugar levels.

The findings are reported in Monday's online edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The researchers studied the sleep patterns of nine volunteers, five men and four women, all of normal weight, in good health and aged 20 to 31.

Normal sleep is divided into several stages, with the so-called slow-wave sleep considered the deepest.

Whenever the volunteers went into slow-wave sleep the researchers made noise—enough to disturb the sleep though not to fully awaken them.

After just three days the ability of the volunteers to regulate blood sugar was reduced by 25 percent, the researchers reported.

Earlier studies have indicated that lack of sleep can reduce the ability to regulate sugar, and this report adds evidence that poor sleep quality is also a diabetes risk.

"This decrease in slow-wave sleep resembles the changes in sleep patterns caused by 40 years of aging," Tasali said in a statement. Young adults spend 80 to 100 minutes per night in slow-wave sleep, while people over age 60 generally have less than 20 minutes. "In this experiment," she said, "we gave people in their 20s the sleep of those in their 60s."

"Since reduced amounts of deep sleep are typical of aging and of common obesity-related sleep disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea, these results suggest that strategies to improve sleep quality, as well as quantity, may help to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes in populations at risk," said co-author Dr. Eve Van Cauter, a professor of medicine.

CAR

From Page 1

related injuries. The New Year's Day celebrations in the CNMI were, however, largely peaceful.

At least two police vehicles immediately blocked the Tun Joaquin Doi Road to prevent motorists from passing the accident scene in front of the Korean Evangelical Holiness Church.

The driver was taken to the Department of Public Safety for further investigation, a police officer told *Saipan Tribune*.

It was not clear yet whether alcohol or speeding was a factor in the crash.

Saipan Tribune gathered that the motorist was driving a white Hyundai sedan with license plate ACF-318 along Tun Joaquin Doi Road and was heading in the direction of Chalan Kanoa area at about 1:15am.

The car swerved, ran off the roadway, and slammed into the power pole on the side of the road in front of the Korean Evangelical Holiness Church.

The impact was so strong that the power pole was bent at an angle.

Fortunately the driver was not injured, the airbag's deployment protecting him from the impact. He managed to get out from the car. The vehicle itself had extensive damage in the front portion.

Responding police officers immediately closed the road while waiting for the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. crew to fix the power pole.

The pole was almost toppled, but it did not cause a power outage in the area at the time. It was not clear as to what time CUC completed the replacement of the power pole.

Meanwhile, as of 1:30am yesterday at least three persons were already taken to the Commonwealth Health Center for injuries related to firecrackers.

The Department of Public Health is expected to release today more information pertaining to injuries as a result of firecrackers or fireworks. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

MANY

From Page 1

"We concede that most nonresident workers support federalization because they have a vested interest in improving their immigration status in order to be allowed to remain in the CNMI indefinitely, or travel to find work in other parts of the United States, rather than return to their own countries," Gov. Benigno R. Fitial said in a statement yesterday.

He added that while he understands and respects the economic and political aspirations of the CNMI's foreign workforce, he insists that the desires of the local population and business community should be given full and fair consideration in the nation's capital.

He noted that federalization is opposed by the administration, the Legislature, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, all of whom previously testified against federalization.

"At a time when the U.S. Senate is expected to pass federal legislation stripping the CNMI of a substantial portion of its local autonomy and local self-government, the vast majority of our local population, private business sector, and local government remains firmly opposed to federalization," Fitial said.

The government also questioned the statement by the Interior Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary David Cohen that, "The center of gravity of public opinion in the CNMI … is reflected in the pro-federalization policies that we have advanced."

Fitial said Cohen was lying. "The fact of the matter," he said, "is that when it comes to federalization, David Cohen is not telling the truth in so far as the CNMI's local population, business community, and elected leaders are concerned."

To make his point, the governor cited testimonies submitted by local community and business leaders at the Aug. 15, 2007 field congressional hearing on Saipan. Former Covenant negotiator Vicente Santos, HANMI chairwoman Lynn M. Knight, former CNMI Justice Jose S. Dela Cruz, and former Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Juan T. Guerrero all testified against federalization.

The U.S. Senate is expected to pass early this month an omnibus bill that includes the text of the CNMI immigration bill as passed by the House of Representatives.

The NMI Immigration, Security, and Labor Act would extend immigration law and create a federally run guest-worker program in the Commonwealth.

It would also give the CNMI a delegate in the House with limited voting powers. Currently, all U.S. possessions except the CNMI have a delegate in Congress.

2007 economic census begins in CNMI

Beginning December, businesses in the Northern Mariana Islands began receiving the 2007 Economic Census form, underscoring the importance of their participation in the CNMI's most comprehensive measure of business and industry taken every five years.

Economic census data provide the hard figures that businesses need when they consider expanding into new geographic areas or markets. Businesses can also look at benchmark values from the economic census to assess where they stand in the marketplace and to research market shares, salaries, product and sales trends, and site locations.

In the 2007 Economic Census, businesses are asked to report information such as employment, payroll, and the value of goods and services sold. Businesses that receive forms are required by law to respond.

Forms must be returned to the U.S. Census Bureau by Feb. 12, 2008. Information about individual firms is kept confidential, and only aggregate industry data are published.

The Census Bureau has updated the Internet help site www.census.gov/econhelp.

Business respondents can view frequently asked questions and answers, view sample forms and communicate securely with Census Bureau account managers who are available to help. The site also shows how to use census data and provides links to previous census results. ***(U.S. Census Bureau)***

MVA exec quits post

A top official of Marianas Visitors Authority has quit his position to take on a job with the private sector.

MVA marketing manager Wayne Pangelinan resigned effective Monday, Dec. 31, 2007. He worked at MVA for nine years, including five and a half years as marketing manager.

Pangelinan said he was proud to have been a part of fostering cohesive communication between the public and private sectors during his stint at MVA.

"This was a true accomplishment as the MVA opened up many doors and opportunities that have built a stronger foundation for the tourism industry. I am very happy to have been an integral part of that.

Pangelinan will take his new job as the owner's representative and director for Ladera International School of Saipan today, Jan. 2, 2008.

"This is quite exciting for me as I have been through the construction field, airline industry, occupational safety, tourism and now the 'edu-tourism' field," he said.

Ladera International School is the first-ever boarding school in the Commonwealth. Located in Fina Sisu, the school opened in June 2006.

Ladera International School can accommodate 120 students with its nine classrooms and other academic facilities and 70 students under its boarding school program.

The international school has a strong emphasis on foreign languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

Amenities include a dormitory, nine classrooms, a computer room, a library, an audio-visual room, a swimming pool, a picnic area, a basketball court, a tennis court, a cafeteria, a barbecue kiosk, and a laundry area. ***(Agnes E. Donato)***

January at the Hyatt Regency Saipan

"A Journey through Italy" at Giovanni's

Enjoy an exquisite combination of romantic piano and a sumptuous menu with favorites from various regions of Italy created by Chef Gabriele Colombo.

"A journey through Italy" set menu is available from January 10th till February 10th
6:00pm - 10:00pm

*Club at the Hyatt cards welcome

Nabe promotion at Miyako

Don't miss your chance to indulge in the popular Japanese hot pot selections.

Nabe promotion is available from January 10th till February 29th
6:00pm - 10:00pm

*Club at the Hyatt cards welcome

Island Flavors at Teppanyaki

Chef Joe showcases a special set menu inspired by the local island cuisine and prepared from the highest quality ingredients. Relish Kelaguen, Banana Leaf Fish in Coconut Sauce, Mix Grill and much more.

Island Flavors set menu is available from January 2nd till February 19th
6:00pm - 10:00pm

*Club at the Hyatt cards welcome

Beach BBQ at the Hyatt

Indulge yourself in our sumptuous BBQ spread at the Hyatt beachfront.
Enjoy the stunning sunset while listening to the melodious "The Star Society" quartet.

Every Tuesday
6:00pm - 9:00pm
$45.00 per person*

*Club at the Hyatt cards welcome

Sunset at the Hyatt

Escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life as you stretch your legs, relax and enjoy our bottomless Margaritas. Savour the jazz sounds of "The Star Society" quartet and Hawaiian dance of Maki Ono as you watch the sun go down.

Happy Hour from 5:00pm till 7:00pm
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Banks told about freeze on assets of 2 lawyers

FIREWORKS ACCIDENT JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

A police officer escorts an injured man to the emergency entrance of the Commonwealth Health Center after sustaining an injury related to firecrackers during the New Year's Eve celebration.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth Govendo notified Monday six banks and the Commonwealth Recorder's Office about the freezing of all accounts and certificates of deposit belonging to suspended attorneys Reynaldo O. Yana and Antonio M. Atalig and two other persons.

The financial institutions informed about the order were Bank of Guam, Bank of Hawaii, Bank of Saipan, Bank Pacific, City Trust Bank, and First Hawaiian Bank.

With the refusal of Yana and Atalig to return $1.14 million in attorney's fees, Govendo said he finds cause to issue an injunction, freezing the assets contained within any accounts held in the names of the two lawyers, Atalig's wife Svetlana Atalig and Atalig's staff Roman Demapan.

The judge ordered the Commonwealth Recorder to file a copy of the court's order "placing the world on constructive notice" that the two lawyers, Svetlana Atalig, and Demapan are stopped from transferring or encumbering any interest they may have in any real or personal properties held in their names "whether that interest is held individually, or jointly with any third parties."

Govendo found attorneys Yana and Atalig in civil contempt for their failure to return $1.1 million received as fees pursuant to an ex parte order that was reversed by the CNMI Supreme Court.

Govendo said he finds that until a lawful order is issued, all such funds must remain the property of the estate of Angel Malite.

During Friday's hearing, Govendo suspended Yana and Atalig from practicing law for failing to return the fees to the court and for not submitting to the court their detailed attorneys' billings.

But the lawyers told *Saipan Tribune* that they spent the attorneys' fees awarded them in the Malite case because they believe it is their money.

Yana said the release of the money was approved by Superior Court associate judge Juan T. Lizama and that the temporary restraining order to stop the payment was denied.

On the suspension order, Yana said they were not surprised because they believe Govendo has something personal against them.

For his part, Atalig said they asked for 90 days to submit detailed billings because it is hard to produce some documents, but Govendo denied their request.

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Haneburg	V027	12/22 Sat	12/27 Thu	1/7 Mon	12/27 Thu	12/24 Mon	12/15 Sat	12/30 Sun	12/31 Mon	12/30 Sun	1/2 Wed	12/22 Sat	12/23 Sun	12/28 Fri	12/29 Sat	1/3 Thu	1/5 Sat	1/6 Sun	1/9 Wed	1/11 Fri	1/12 Sat	1/15 Tue
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Slyvette	V014	1/5 Sat	1/10 Thu	1/21 Mon	1/10 Thu	1/5 Sat	12/29 Sat	1/13 Sun	1/14 Mon	1/13 Sun	1/16 Wed	1/5 Sat	1/6 Sun	1/11 Fri	1/12 Sat	1/17 Thu	1/19 Sat	1/22 Tue	1/23 Wed	1/25 Fri	1/26 Sat	1/29 Tue
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Stadt Hamburg	V012	2/9 Sat	2/14 Thu	2/25 Mon	2/14 Thu	2/11 Mon	2/2 Sat	2/17 Sun	2/18 Mon	2/17 Sun	2/20 Wed	2/8 Fri	1/21 Mon	2/15 Fri	2/16 Sat	2/21 Thu	2/23 Sat	SKIP	2/27 Wed	2/29 Fri	3/1 Sat	3/4 Tue

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PAWS teaches kids how to care for pets

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

The Pet Assistance and Welfare Services conducted a three-week pet care instruction at the DanDan Elementary School with the help of a dog named Wyatt.

According to DES principal Jonas Barcinas, PAWS shared their knowledge with students from kindergarten to the sixth grade on the proper ways of taking care of pets, using Wyatt to demonstrate.

Barcinas described the PAWS' pet care instruction as an outstanding outreach program for the students in the collaboration with the school.

"PAWS is a clear indication of the purpose of this educational presentations," Barcinas said.

According to Barcinas, the students and staff were impressed and particularly enjoyed having Wyatt around.

"The kids were very respectful and thoughtful about taking care of their own pets as well," Barcinas said.

The program was conducted by PAWS president Katie Busenkell and board member Rose Callier.

DADDY'S BIRTHDAY

Happy birthday greetings go out to Felipe Selepeo, who is celebrating his birthday today, Jan. 2, 2007. "Thinking of you on your special day. We miss and love you very much! Happy birthday, Dad!" From the family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Justices sanction Labor counsel, AGO

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

The CNMI Supreme Court has sanctioned the Attorney General's Office and Department of Labor legal counsel Eleanor O. Nisperos after finding that Nisperos practiced law as an assistant attorney general without first being admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth.

The high court determined that Nisperos failed to submit a timely application to practice law and that the AGO's delay of her application contributed to the unauthorized practice of law.

According to the high court, Nisperos and the AGO must be disciplined "in order to protect the courts, the legal profession, and the people of the Commonwealth."

Nisperos reportedly practiced law without a license in the Commonwealth for a period of almost four months, in violation of Commonwealth Rules of Admission.

The high court sanctioned the AGO and Nisperos to jointly pay a $500 fine payable to the Supreme Court.

But the Supreme Court ordered the CNMI Bar Administrator to accept Nisperos' application for admission to practice law in the Commonwealth.

"Nisperos' admittance, however, is contingent upon a favorable background check by the National Conference of Bar Examiners," said the high court's opinion signed by chief justice Miguel S. Demapan and associate justices John A. Manglona and Alexandro C. Castro.

The justices said they are troubled with the role the AGO played in this matter.

"The primary responsibility of the AGO is to serve the people of the Commonwealth in upholding and enforcing the Commonwealth's laws. When the AGO disregards court rules, or otherwise contributes to the unauthorized practice of law, the Commonwealth is ill-served," the justices said.

The justices noted that the AGO took two-and-a-half months to notify Nisperos of her rejected application, which came in part because the AGO failed to provide proper payment for its processing.

The justices said there is no doubt that the AGO harms the people of the Commonwealth when it carelessly delays the admittance of an assistant attorney general into the CNMI Bar Association.

"The AGO is the highest institution of law enforcement in the Commonwealth, and it should be the first to follow the rules of the court," they pointed out.

The CNMI Supreme Court received Nisperos' application for admission to practice law on a temporary basis on Nov. 28, 2007.

Nisperos's contract with the AGO states that her employment was to begin June 20, 2007, but Nisperos did not sign the contract until July 31, 2007.

The differing dates make it unclear as to the exact date she began working for the AGO. She, however, claims she began as an AAG on July 16, 2007.

In their opinion, the justices cited that the Commonwealth Rules of Admission state that attorneys may not commence practicing law for the government until their bar application is approved and they have taken the oath of admission before a Supreme Court justice.

Thus, the justices said, in violation of the Rules, it took Nisperos from Aug. 2, 2007 until Nov. 28, 2007, almost four months after she signed and filed documents in the trial court, to request admittance to practice law in the CNMI courts.

On Dec. 11, 2007, the justices ordered Nisperos to cease her practice of law and show cause as to why she should not be disciplined and her application for admission should not be denied.

In her response, Nisperos accepted complete responsibility for failing to be admitted to the CNMI Bar Association before practicing law in the Commonwealth.

She noted that she initially submitted her completed application to the AGO on Sept. 10, 2007. She claims that her original application authorized payment for her background check from her personal credit card.

However, Nisperos states that the AGO removed her payment authorization form and assured her that the AGO would pay for the background check.

On Sept. 12, 2007, the AGO submitted Nisperos's application without the required $250 payment, resulting in its rejection.

Nisperos states that although she inquired about the status of her application via email on Sept. 18, 2007, a deputy attorney general did not inform her of her rejected application until Dec. 6, 2007.

On Dec. 11, 2007, the same day the high court ordered Nisperos to show cause as to why she should not be disciplined for practicing law without a license, the AGO placed her on administrative leave.

During the hearing at the high court, Nisperos accepted responsibility of her rejected application, as well as her unauthorized practice of law.

Nisperos highlighted her record as a government attorney for 36 years, and stressed that she meant no disrespect to the CNMI Supreme Court, the Bar Association, or the people of the Commonwealth.

In their opinion, the justices said Nisperos's contrite response to their order to show cause, her sincere demeanor at the hearing, and her outstanding record as a government attorney for 36 years strongly influenced their decision.

"Notwithstanding Nisperos's apologetic attitude and acceptance of blame, however, we cannot ignore her conduct," they said.

The justices pointed out that as an AAG, Nisperos has an obligation to both the Commonwealth and the legal profession to abide by the rules of the high court and the laws of the Commonwealth.

"With thirty-six years of experience as a government attorney, we find it disconcerting that Nisperos failed on such a fundamental level," the justices said.

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A bad month for islands' animals

According to PAWS, December was a bad month for the animals of Saipan.

On Dec. 10, two dogs were stolen from a family residence in As Mahetok. A male Chocolate Lab named Bruno and a female boonie dog named Haley were taken from their family's property while the family was at work. Neither dog has been found and no information regarding the theft of these dogs has been reported to the owners or PAWS.

Also in early December, a male black boonie was taken from a family residence behind Hi-Mart. Again, no information has been reported on the whereabouts of this animal.

On Dec. 20, PAWS received a report about a dog that was rescued from the kitchen of a Korean restaurant. The dog was taken to Paradise Island Animal Hospital for evaluation and treatment. During a visit to the property where the restaurant is located in San Jose, neighbors told PAWS that they had witnessed a dog being beaten to death with a 2x4 last year. One child said she had witnessed a dog being boiled for soup.

On Dec. 21, PAWS had a dog euthanized in the San Vicente area because its owner had abandoned the dog, without food or water, after tethering it to a structure. Numerous attempts were made to locate the owner, but unfortunately no one came forward to claim the dog. The dog was not adoptable because it appeared to be timid and aggressive.

On Dec. 26, PAWS received a report about a neglected dog in Puerto Rico. According to the rescuer, the dog was infested with fleas and ticks and its skin was inaccessible because the hair was matted together. Less than 24 hours after receiving the report, the dog died after efforts were taken to save its life.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This dog was found in the Marpi area. She weighs about 15 lbs and had on a collar.

On Dec. 28, a woman found a dog in the Marpi area. "As I was walking up, this dog approached me and was sort of whimpering. Small, skin all red, blistered, peeling. Open sores. Almost completely hairless, even the tail. Emaciated beyond comprehension. She weighs about 15 lbs. Had on a collar."

PAWS is hoping to find the owner of the dog, as it is believed that she once belonged to someone that cared for her. "She knows the word 'sit,' she is not afraid of people, and she is seeking to be comforted by human touch," PAWS said. If her owner is not found, and the dog survives, the rescuer will keep the dog.

And on Dec. 29, a Saipan resident rescued a 6-week-old kitten from Joeten's grocery store in Garapan. Before taking the kitten, the rescuer inquired whether the kitten belonged to anyone in the area. No one claimed to know anything about the kitten, other than noting that it first appeared two days earlier. The rescuer said, "I was really disturbed and irritated by the number of people that walked by this visibly scared and abandoned kitten. These people looked at it and did nothing." That kitten is now in a foster home and available for adoption to a good home.

PAWS noted that these are just a few of the cases reported this month. "We are always saddened to hear of so many animals being neglected and abused by people, especially during this "joyful' time of year," said PAWS president Katie Busenkell.

For more information on the animals of PAWS, visit www.paws-saipan.org or www.paws-saipan.blogspot.com. ***(PAWS)***

NMI farmers to take part in agri census

It's the 2007 Census of Agriculture, coming soon to mailboxes on rural routes all over the nation, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Dating to 1790, the ag census is a government effort to take the pulse of agriculture every five years.

Thick packets of census forms, looking a bit like tax booklets, were mailed Friday. The government isn't asking for the information; farmers are required by law to return their census forms by Feb. 4.

For the first time, farmers will have the option of completing and filing their 2007 questionnaire online.

It is estimated that it should take about 50 minutes to fill out the 24-page survey sent to diversified farms and 35 minutes for the 12-page survey sent to row crop farms.

Questions asked by the census are updated every five years to reflect changes in farming.

This year's survey has added a section on organic agriculture, which has shown rapid growth in the five years since 2002, when there were two questions asked about organic farming.

The survey also seeks more detail on government payments received by farmers and the types of payments received.

A new section has been added where producers can answer "yes" or "no" to questions about Internet access, electrical generation on the farm or other practices.

Producers also will be asked if their farms have a barn built before 1960, whether they participate in agri-tourism or if they have horticulture or aquaculture sales.

Joseph Prusacki, director of the Iowa field office of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, said there are good reasons for farmers to spend the time enumerating the number the hogs, cattle, corn and soybeans they raise.

"It might be difficult for farmers to see how the census of agriculture impacts them, but many government farm policies are based on the information contained in the census," Prusacki said. "This is the only place you can find these kinds of statistics on the county-level."

Agribusinesses and others also have a need to know what is out there in farm country.

Implement companies, for example, also can use the census to find out how many tractors are in a particular county, which the company can use in business planning.

The USDA will compile the information gathered in the 2007 ag census by December 2008, Prusacki said, and then release the information in electronic and print formats in February 2009.

The census is meant to cover all farms, defined by the Department of Agriculture as any entity with $1,000 in annual sales or potential sales.

"If you have a few acres with some horses and goats, guess what?" Prusacki said. "You're a farm."

That low-ball definition of a farm means there are 121,627 mail boxes in Iowa that will receive a census form.

About 3.2 million surveys will go to farmers in the United States and its territories.

"We're getting names from other USDA agencies and from producer groups," Prusacki said. "Just about any source we can."

The census wants its questions answered by farm operators, meaning those who farm the land, Prusacki said. It is not interested in hearing from farmland owners if they don't run the farm enterprise. ***(Register Farm)***

TRICARE briefing on Friday

Reservists, their family, retirees, their families and survivors should know that on Jan. 5, 2008 at 9am there will be a briefing about TRICARE at the Professional Building at the Army Reserve Center. A TRICARE representative will be on island for that day only.

The briefing will last until 12pm at the Army Reserve Center.

Any questions or for further information, call Ruth Coleman at the Office of Military/Veterans Affairs at 664-2650 or SSG Noel Chargualaf at 483-7465 or 322-6680. ***(PR)***

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 02, 2003

Firecrackers injure 2 kids

Two children were hurt from firecracker blasts on New Year's Eve, the Commonwealth Health Center said. One of the children, a three-and-a-half-year-old girl, sustained minor injury on the face and was rushed to the CHC emergency room shortly before 12 Tuesday night. The other child was brought in hours later, authorities said.

Number of adults overshadows growth in children's population

The difference between the growth rate in the population of adults and children in the Northern Marianas has alarmed population experts, noting that the outpaced increase in the number of kids in the Commonwealth may overshadow the needs of the islands' youngest residents. This, even as recently released United States Census data disclosed that the number of children in the CNMI grew by 49 percent between 1990 and 2000, or from 11,905 to 17,733. Children under the age of 18 account for just 26 percent of the population, down from 27 percent in 1990, and far from the 57-percent share they held in 1970.

Lawmakers reviewing UN asylum treaty

The Senate is drafting legislation that would address the fate of asylum seekers in the Commonwealth, possibly through the adoption of the "Status of Refugees" articles under the U.N. treaty to which the U.S. is a signatory. But Sen. Thomas P. Villagomez, after meeting with government lawyers on the asylum issue this week, explained that since the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has no jurisdiction over the CNMI, the local government cannot tackle the issue through the "asylum" approach, per se.

January 02, 2004

CPA paints rosy picture for 2004

The Commonwealth Ports Authority is confident that 2004 will be fruitful for the tourism industry, with the good showing of incoming passenger haul in the last part of 2003 expected on the continue in this Year of the Monkey. CPA executive director Carlos H. Salas was first to make public his "fearless forecast" about the state of the local travel sector, basing his rosy projection to steady climb of arrival figures in the last months.

House allows 65 more FTEs for CHC

What the House of Representatives failed to do last Tuesday they finally managed last Wednesday: approving the joint resolution that would increase the Commonwealth Health Center's slots-or FTE's-for nurses by an additional 65. House Joint Resolution 13-036 finally secured a super-majority vote of 15, with only one dissenting, Rep. Stanley Torres. Reps. Oscar M. Babauta and Normal Palacios were absent and excused during the session.

Taekwang, CUC to resume desalination project talks

As far as Taekwang Heavy Industries and the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation are concerned, the desalination project on Saipan is very much alive despite a recent recommendation from the Office of the Public Auditor for its cancellation. Taekwang vice chairman and marketing president Ed M. Guerrero, in a press briefing on Dec. 31, said his office just received a new notice from the CUC for the resumption of project presentation.

January 02, 2005

'2005 a very promising year'

Gov. Juan N. Babauta has called on the public to get ready for busier and more productive days this year. "This year appears to be very promising. Our people should better be ready for more exciting days ahead as we see improved economic activities this year," said the governor, who just arrived from a trip to Beijing where he signed the much-awaited Approved Destination Status agreement with China.

Adriano urges Babauta to approve '05 budget

Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano urged Gov. Juan N. Babauta to approve the 2005 budget bill, which authorizes the government to spend up to $218 million in fiscal year 2005. "I understand that they [administration] are still working on the bill. I'm not sure about the governor's decision but I hope he approves it," said Adriano.

Pacific

33 receive chiefly titles in Samoa

APIA, Samoa (Samoa Observer/PIR)—Thirty-three descendents of Maualaivao were conferred matai (chiefly) titles at Malie yesterday.

Seven titles were bestowed, said Mauala Piki Tuala, Secretary of the Maualaivao family.

Mauala Piki said new title holders were necessary because the head of the family, Maualaivao Taugali, passed on in July this year.

Ten were bestowed with the titles of Mauala and Falua.

They were: Mauala Koria, Mauala Maima, Mauala Polaiu'amea, Mauala Piki, Mauala Raponi, Mauala Sesili, Mauala Siope and Mauala Tanumafili, Falua Gasio and Falua Pete.

The other 23 were bestowed with orator titles of Leupolu, Aumatagi, Falefitu, Masuisui and Peo.

They were: Leupolu Komisi, Leupolu Korinito, Leupolu Pelenato, Leupolu Petania, Leupolu Semisi, Leupolu Seso, Leupolu Sunu, Leupolu Tama, Aumatagi Aki, Aumatagi Falemaota, Aumatagi Kueni, Aumatagi Lelei, Aumatagi Malaki, Aumatagi Malcolm, Aumatagi Raponi (Junior), Aumatagi Tanumafili Tuitele, Falefitu Ioane, Falefitu Peletumua, Masuisui Piki (Junior), Masuisui Tala, Masuisui Aivi, Peo Kuresa and Peo Pollard.

IMF: Marshalls economy shows little promise

MAJURO, Marshall Islands (Yokwe/PIR)—An International Monetary Fund presentation this month in the Republic of the Marshall Islands reiterated what other reports have warned: The small, Pacific nation's financial status quo is not sustainable for future generations. The IMF mission addressed the need for immediate tax reform and re-examination of Trust Fund projections.

"If there is little or no attempt at fiscal reform and discipline well before 2024, future generations will inherit a bitter financial situation," said Carl Hacker, director of the RMI's Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office, in response to the findings.

The IMF's Article IV missions provide advice and recommendations for the government in fiscal policy. This year, the IMF team wanted to present more of its finding to a broader public. Four IMP economists spent two weeks interviewing people, collecting data and information on the fiscal health of the economy and government, as well as producing some reports describing the future - based on scenarios driven by the local data. The IMF presentations, made publicly on Dec. 11, focused on strengthening the RMI tax system and long-term fiscal Sustainability of the Compact Trust Fund.

Although there have been numerous studies looking at tax reform, continued weaknesses in tax administration, policies, and enforcement, hinder budgetary self-sufficiency:

■ Inequity and Uneven Grounds. Lower income households are paying more than their fair share in taxes, but this is not the case in many higher income households (greater than $30,000 a year). The current tax regime places an undue burden on lower income households compared to higher income households. Tax base is also concentrated on small portion of businesses.

■ Distorted Incentives on Trade, Investment, and Consumption.

■ Tax Compliance. Thirty to 40 percent of taxpayers are non-compliant with the current tax systems, which translates into $9 to $10 million a year loss for the national treasury.

■ Accumulation of Tax Arrears. There has been lack of enforcement and penalties for repeat offenders. Duplicate efforts of local and national governments' tax collections add to the problem.

Way too much is being lost, given the current needs of the government and country, said the EPPSO Director.

He pointed to the fact that the Majuro Atoll Local Government was placed in financial receivership recently due to millions owed to Marshall Islands Social Security Administration. "There are consequences for financial mismanagement and many, many chickens are coming home to roost, not just for MalGov, but for government and state-owned enterprises, in general."

Ousted Solomons PM questions Moti arrest

HONIARA, Solomon Islands (SIBC/PIR)—The leader of the Solomon Islands parliamentary opposition, recently-ousted as prime minister, Manasseh Sogavare, has questioned the role played by both the Solomon Islands Police Service and Australian Federal Police in arresting former attorney general Julian Moti while an order by the Magistrate court to stay any action until Moti's application for asylum is heard.

Sogavare says that action sets a dangerous precedent on the administration of justice and a mockery of their authority.

He says the Commissioner of Police and the Commander of the Participating Police Force as heads of the country's law enforcing agencies must at all times act within the bounds of laws of the country and only enforce their correct application.

Sogavare says the recent action in deporting Moti was an example of the continuing disregard of the laws of Solomon Islands and the desire to control by the occupying force.

He says unless Solomon Islanders begin to appreciate the seriousness of this development, Solomon Islanders will lose control of their country.

Sogavare says it's sad that certain elements of the Solomon Islands Police force have succumbed to agendas of the occupying force.

PACIFIC BRIEFS

'Fijian-only president discriminatory'

SUVA, Fiji (Fijilive/PIR)—The Citizens Constitutional Forum says the position of Fiji's President and Vice President should be given to non-indigenous Fijians as well. "The CCF remains concerned that the position of President in Fiji is restricted to only Fijians and chiefs," CCF CEO Rev Akuila Yabaki says. "The restriction means that the President and Vice President's position in Fiji is in fact, discriminatory of other races in Fiji." Yabaki adds that given the difficulty in finding an appropriate person for the position of President and Vice President, "the time may be right to allow a person from any race to take up this position". He said the Constitution did not restrict the choice to one community. "It's only the way it's done; the actual process of choice has to be done by the Great Council of Chiefs. The GCC could appoint anybody from whatever community," Yabaki said.

Pukapuka finds cheaper fuel supplier in Samoa

RAROTONGA, Cook Islands (Cook Islands News/PIR)—Petrol and diesel is on its way to Pukapuka in a deal with Samoa suppliers for about half the price it can be bought from Rarotonga's fuel suppliers. Money stumped up by private Pukapukan interests has enabled the northern group island to avoid Cook Islands suppliers for not just fuel but also general merchandise. News of this reached Rarotonga yesterday after reports of a Christmas supply crisis on Pukapuka. The distance between Pukapuka and Apia, Samoa, is just 390 nautical miles, nearly half the distance between Rarotonga and Pukapuka (715 nautical miles).

MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY

VACANCY RE-ANNOUNCEMENT
Announcement No. 08-001

POSITION TITLE: Chief Accountant
ANNUAL SALARY: $40,000.00 - $50,000.00**
***Salary will commensurate with qualifications*
LOCATION: Saipan, CNMI
OPENING DATE: December 20, 2007
CLOSING DATE: January 3, 2008 or UNTIL FILLED

Applications must be submitted by 5:00pm on the closing date. If not filled, every two weeks thereafter until search is closed. Deadlines that fall on a non-business day will be extended to the next business day.

Minimum Qualification Requirements: Any combination equivalent to a graduate from a recognized college or university with a Bachelor's degree in Accounting, with two (2) years of experience in CNMI government accounting and four (4) years of supervisory experience. Applicant must be proficient with using Peachtree Accounting Software, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. Applicants may be required to take an accounting test as part of the application process. All applicants must be a U.S. citizen or an I.R. citizen of the CNMI. Copies of identification are required upon submission of application.

HOW TO APPLY: Interested persons may contact the Marianas Visitors Authority Office at (670) 664-3200/01 for a copy of the vacancy announcement or by emailing personnel@mymarianas.com for an employment application form. A completed application should be submitted together with the required documents to complete the application process no later than the closing date of the announcement. Failure to submit all the required documentation will not be considered.

MVA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
NMHC RFP 2008-001

ARCHAEOLOGICAL-CONSULTANT SERVICES

This Ad is paid for by NMHC with HUD funds.

The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) through its Chairman of the Board, is soliciting the professional services of a qualified archaeological-consultant who meets Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archaeology pursuant to 36CFR61 for the Susupe Sports Complex in Saipan, for the benefit of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Interested proposers may pick up a copy of the Scope of Work at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays.

Procurement of these services is made in accordance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, Section 3-103. Proposals for the project will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

A. Requirements

1. Qualifications and experience of the proposer (35%);
2. Knowledge of federal and local laws pertaining to the excavation and/or findings of human remains, artifacts and archaeological survey documentation as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as well as compliance to the CNMI's Historic Resources Preservation Program (35%);
3. Experience with local CNMI and regional areas with respect to archaeological issues and findings (15%);
4. Existing and/or prior client base, type of archaeological services and copy of final report related to such experience/services (15%).

B. Cost/Contingent Fee

Price is also a factor that will be considered and will be evaluated in comparison with overall merit of proposals. Technical merit is more important than price, and the Government reserves the right to award to other than the lowest priced proposer. As proposals become more equal in technical merit, the importance of price will increase.

On Thursday, January 10, 2008, NMHC and HPO will conduct a pre-proposal conference at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan at 10:00 a.m. to discuss the project requirements. All interested proposers are encouraged to attend the Pre-Proposal Conference. Site visits will be arranged by NMHC and HPO staff after the pre-proposal conference to anyone who desires an on-site visit to the project site.

Interested proposers must submit an original and four (4) copies of signed, sealed proposals marked **"NMHC RFP2008 - 001 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANT SERVICES"** to the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, not later than January 16, 2008, at 10:00 a.m. Any proposals received after the above date and time will not be accepted under any circumstances, unless submitted by a proposer outside the Commonwealth and postmarked by January 16, 2008, **AND** received not later than January 28, 2008. In order to receive this additional time, proposers outside the Commonwealth must notify the Director, Procurement and Supply in writing not later than 10:00 a.m., January 16, 2008 of their intention to submit a proposal. Notice can be by e-mail to procurement@pticom.com or by fax to (670) 664-1515.

Discussions may be conducted with the responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to insure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion and revision of proposals and such revisions may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offer. In conducting discussions, there shall be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors. All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the proposer awarded a contract. The firm selected will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the Procurement Regulation Section 3-301 and must possess a valid CNMI Business License in order to sign a contract.

Award shall be made to the responsible offerors whose proposals are determined in writing to be most advantageous to the government taking into consideration price and the evaluation factors set forth in this request for proposal. No other factors or criteria shall be used in the evaluation. Proposals shall be subject to rejection for conflicts of interests.

All proposals submitted shall become the sole property of the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive any defects in said proposals, to negotiate with all qualified offerers, or to cancel this RFP if it is in the best interest of NMHC and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

NMHC hereby notifies all proposers that it will affirmatively ensure that, in any contacts entered into pursuant to this advertisement, small, minority businesses and women's business enterprises will be afforded equal opportunity to submit proposals and will not be discriminated against on grounds of race, color, religion, sex, disabilities or national origin.

MANUEL A. SABLAN
Chairman of the Board

HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director, Procurement and Supply

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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John Pangelinan PUBLISHER
Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
Mark Rabago ASSISTANT EDITOR

MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

'The blessings of liberty'

Over the last several weeks, we have used this space to articulate our own values and those that have historically defined our nation. We have attempted to look at the United States through the prism of its founding principles—to imagine a more perfect union devoted to life, liberty and justice, the pursuit of happiness, the powers of the earth, domestic tranquillity, the general welfare and the common defense. Such a nation, we are happy to report, is indeed visible, if sometimes hard to see.

From our exploration of these distinctly American principles, we have compiled a set of ideas that frame our view of the election. We support a compassionate immigration policy that welcomes new arrivals and extends this nation's diversity. We champion a woman's right to choose to have an abortion and deplore an overbearing state that presumes to impose capital punishment. We demand a government that is respectful of science and intelligent in its protection of the environment. We call for new leadership in education and new commitment to alleviating poverty, as well as sensible approaches to taxes and spending. We are dismayed at the erosion of liberty presided over by the present administration, which has spent these last seven years weakening the nation's security, piling on debt, smirking over global warming and sowing divisiveness for political gain.

The end of the Bush administration provides the opportunity for a renewal of generosity and hope, for a widening of political and cultural horizons, for a return to strength tempered by humility, for an era of decency and mutual respect rather than the blunt exercise of force.

That will be the mission of the next president. Our challenge—as readers, as journalists, as Americans—is to select that man or woman with care, acknowledging that it is not as simple as merely laying out a list of issues and seeing who matches up best. There are, for instance, many Americans who will appreciate Rudolph W. Giuliani's support for abortion rights and tolerance of gays—we are among them—but who will wonder whether the irascible former New York City mayor has the temperament for the presidency. And many who would cheer the election of the nation's first female president will nevertheless harbor doubts about whether Hillary Rodham Clinton is the right candidate to break that barrier.

We have considered the enduring words of America's founders alongside the positions of its current leaders. So it seems fitting to close with Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and staunch advocate of freedom. It was Jefferson who remarked in a letter in 1796 that "timid men ... prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty."

And indeed, one characteristic of the Bush administration has been its wearying appeal to the weak, to those who are threatened by energetic political expression and instead take refuge in the slow forfeit of their rights; to those too timid to trust that hateful speech is best rebutted by more speech, not by squelching dissent; to those so unnerved by terrorism that they would condone torture. We live in a nation that once had the confidence to defend the speech and association rights of American communists even as it fought their sponsors and supporters abroad. Yet that same nation now flinches at the threat posed by a high school student who displays a banner that reads, nonsensically, "BONG HiTS 4 JESUS."

That is a depressing relinquishment of what has given the United States its place in history. We hope, with fervent optimism, for a president who will embrace our defining love of liberty and who will relish, not disdain, its many blessings.

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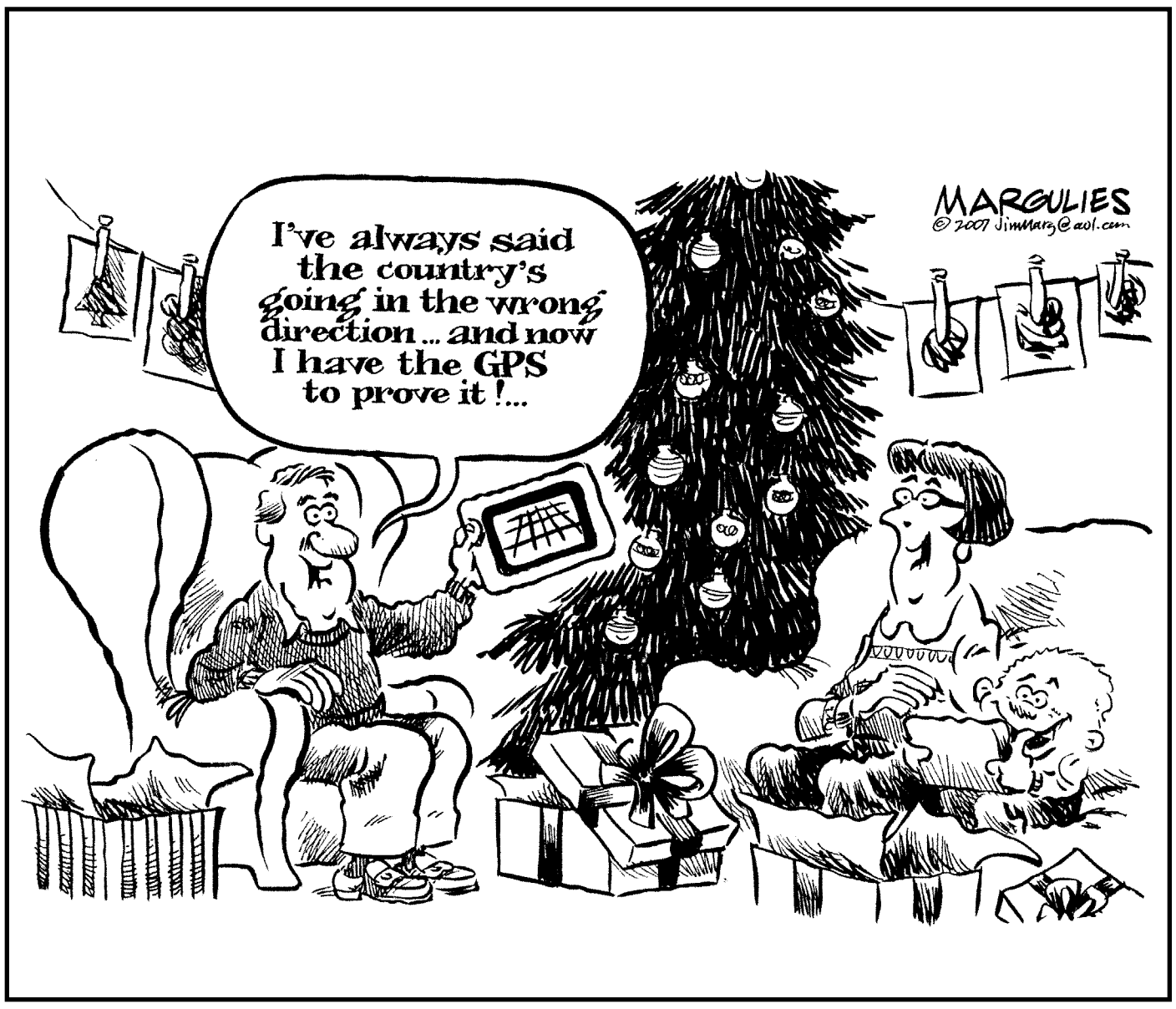
I've always said the country's going in the wrong direction... and now I have the GPS to prove it!...
MARGULIES
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Forecast for '08: Gloom, with periods of ungloom

By JOEL STEIN
Special to the Los Angeles Times

Stein is a columnist for the Times.

How right were my 2007 predictions? Let's just say they included oil at $100 a barrel, the sub-prime meltdown and racist outbursts from Don Imus and Bill O'Reilly.

For 2008, I see a lot of gloom. But I also see ungloom. And a vague sort of blobby thing that could either be the end of the world or a smallish volcano/earthquake/flood-type thing in some poor country. Visions can be hard to read. Especially when you're drinking a lot, due to the gloomy stuff.

So here is my set of predictions for 2008. Clip it, laminate it, drop it in your time capsule and let it be some future generation's problem:

HOUSING MARKET
Home prices drop an astounding 15 percent. Far more disheartening to Americans who bought homes in the last three years, stainless steel kitchen appliances go out of style.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
Barack Obama wins the general election but does not carry the Northeast, due to New Englanders' increasingly implausible excuse, "It's not that we're racist; it's just that the South would never elect a black person."

WRITERS STRIKE
The Directors Guild accepts a crappy deal from the studios, and a week later, the Writers Guild agrees to the same terms, calling it a "major victory for the proletariat." Studios are then flooded with 150 comedy scripts about an out-of-work dad who drives his wife and kids crazy. Michael Keaton once again commands $20 million.

WHITE HOUSE
In late December, no longer intimidated by the power of the vice presidency, Dick Cheney's friend shoots him right back in the face.

LOS ANGELES TIMES OP-ED PAGE
Rosa Brooks, after a long coffee with Jonah Goldberg, decides that she is not only for the invasion of Iraq but also the invasion of Jonah's heart.

NEW YORK TIMES OP-ED PAGE
Thomas Friedman adopts a strident voice of urgency on topics ranging from carbon emissions, Middle East democracy and globalization to carbon emissions, Middle East democracy and globalization.

MUSIC
A major rap star retires, and, two months later, unretires with a new hit album. Also, the big summer hit is Amy Winehouse's "Seriously, Dude, I'm Not Going Back to Rehab."

FOOD
Every new restaurant in America serves only small plates. Patrons remain blissfully unaware that four small $12 plates equal a $48 entree.

SPORTS
The Patriots win the Super Bowl again, and the Red Sox win the World Series again; the city of Boston is set two more steps back from realizing its utter irrelevance.

ENVIRONMENT
Al Gore agrees to head a beefed-up version of the Environmental Protection Agency. His first act: Condemning Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's front lawn.

RUSSIA
In the final months of Vladimir Putin's term, Garry Kasparov is imprisoned and becomes the undefeated prison checkers champion.

DIPLOMACY
In December, President-elect Obama and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad walk away from their first meeting with one significant agreement: No more neckties!

ONLINE
In the space of three weeks in the late fall, Facebook loses almost all its traffic to some other social network site that seems exactly the same to anyone older than 15.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

In search of the invisible game

The only way to take control of your life, raise your standard of living and move beyond merely surviving is to create your own unique product or service that you offer to increasing numbers of people in exchange for the things of value that you desire. This simple formula applies to countries as well as people. A self-sufficient economy has its own products or services of value to export to the world. Similarly, a self-sufficient individual has something of value to exchange in the global marketplace. That thing of value is based on your natural talent, skill, or interest—in other words, your passion!

I've had the fortune, I believe, to attract so as to be introduced to people, concepts, ways of thought and action that have broadened my understanding of life, assisted me in the pursuit and attainment of happiness as I define it, allowed me the fulfillment of life-long dreams and aspirations, provided me the satisfaction of being rewarded financially for my talents and gifts, granted me the company of friends and lovers who have enriched my life's experience, and honored me with the opportunity to share these experiences with others in a variety of ways to help them do the same. That in effect is how I define MY life lived well.

These ways of thought and action have served me well on this journey. They've helped me to maintain an even keel when all others around me have been buffeted by the waves of circumstance. They've helped me to navigate reality, make sound decisions, survive and thrive.

My personal mission statement in life is: *"I share what I know, so that others may grow"*

Therefore, I share these insights in my writings in the hope that others find them helpful to live the life of their dreams.

Now, as a writer, I don't like to write things that have already been written. That is to say, what I have to say in these columns is not new. They represent a growing awareness, ways of thinking, and a perspective of reality which thousands for many years, and millions more in years to come will adopt. For those who have never heard some of these concepts before, what I offer is an overview for the sake of introduction, a distillation for the sake of brevity, and a quick summary for the sake of explaining, in possibly new ways old concepts that others have spent their entire lives introducing, distilling and summarizing.

A DEGREE OF CERTAINTY

As our thought for the new year, I'm going to suggest to you the following:

The reason life seems unpredictable, the reason why things happen the way they do, and often seem to defy normal standards of human kindness, morality and ethics is not because men are all evil. It's not because things are beyond our control. It's not because life is essentially bad. It's simply because we don't know the real game that's being played.

There is a formula that goes like this: "Peace of Mind" comes when persons or a society are "centered." Centeredness comes from certainty. Certainty comes from only one place: the recognition of patterns. So when a person or society has recognized a pattern as great as all of Creation, there is great certainty and centeredness—and there is great Peace of Mind.

—from The Mayan Calendar: The Next Nine Years

When I read that quote, I instantly related to it because it clarified for me something I've been doing all my life. I realized that my mind has always been in search of patterns. It's the quest and discovery of patterns that makes me good at mathematics and made obtaining my civil engineering degree a bit easier than most. It's what helps me be an effective writer, coach, public speaker and (I believe) friend. Patterns help me understand life.

Once a pattern is discerned, it can be recognized, recorded, codified, tested, extrapolated to other situations and taught as an effective means of negotiating reality. If the pattern is based on natural phenomena, it can be recreated if need be, but more importantly it can be used to understand the laws that govern the patterns. Once a pattern is recognized it means that something predictable is behind it. A predictable thing is a knowable thing. It is this knowingness that leads to certainty.

Certainty, like the certainty of having a good tip on a horse race, can help you beat the odds. Life is like that. If you know with a degree of certainty what's going to happen next, you can plan your moves, anticipate, prepare for, adjust and position yourself to create the outcome you desire.

So how can you achieve that knowingness? Answer: Find the right set of rules.

THE STORY OF THE FOREIGN GAME

Imagine that you are playing the game of soccer after having been taught a set of incomplete rules, skills and strategies. Imagine that you were never taught how to score, but simply how to dribble from one end of the field to the other. You could play the game for an entire season, and never achieve what others—with better access to the rules and strategies—are able to achieve.

This is a metaphor for a life that millions live every day. In many ways, there is almost an entire planetary population being misled by those who taught them an incomplete set of rules of the game, what is really going on, what the objective really is, and how to achieve it. As a result, they end up playing the game they THINK is being played, the only way they know how—with limited skills and strategy—only to find out too late, and after great frustration, that they're playing the wrong game, by virtue of not knowing the real rules.

I'd like to suggest to you that you may be playing a game by rules that are not the "real" rules—especially if things aren't proceeding in an orderly, predictable and pattern-based way in your life. You may be playing a foreign game. You may be playing based on a worldview that recognizes only what's visible.

THE INVISIBLE GAME

If you believe that this game is only about what's visible, then many of life's questions appear to have answers that make little sense, and don't seem to maintain any degree of consistency as far as your basic understanding of reality.

Many people believe that many of life's important questions are without answers. By that I mean, sure there are logical, or scientific reasons to explain the events leading up to a war, or there are concepts like crib death that explain why infants die, or astute psychological analyses of deep scars and emotional disturbances at the root of people's antisocial behavior, but when people ask "why" they want to know what's the divine plan behind it all. They are seeking the invisible game, but are often encouraged to look at what's accessible by the five senses, while dismissing everything else as mystery.

If they believe in a supreme being, one who is just and fair (we'll forget the vengeful and wrathful supreme being for now), then people are at a loss to understand the pain, sadness that comes from loss and why such a being would allow bad things to happen to good people—in this visible world.

I suggest to you that there is a different game being played. One with a set of rules that are going to require a great deal of courage to accept. Accepting these new rules is going to mean uprooting your beliefs; it's going to mean living with the awareness that you've been lied to, that your parents, though not responsible for it, were collaborators in the perpetuation of the lie, that you will be perceived as crazy, and that you may be branded a heretic or dissenter for sticking to and promoting your new beliefs.

Again, these are not new ideas. They exist in many shapes and forms in a variety of texts (old and new), and are held and propagated in various worldviews, curricula, belief systems and observations.

THE SAIPANPRENEUR PROJECT

Creating economic success for the CNMI

By WALT F.J. GOODRIDGE
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Send article suggestions, entrepreneur nominations and feedback about this article to walt@passionprofit.com.

In fact, the whole self-help, personal development movement is about introducing people to "new" ways of thinking, being and behaving that are more in alignment with the real game. More and more, people are being introduced to snippets of truth that allow them to live more productive lives.

I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT...

You've got nothing to lose by holding two seemingly contradictory belief systems in your mind until one or the other wins out and proves itself more accurate. If you, as that un-trained team were now taught a new set of rules, skills and strategies, and decided to look anew at the game you've been playing with this new understanding, it would either seem to conform to your original beliefs or it would seem to be explained a whole lot better by your new beliefs. Once that happens, you'd be foolish to hold on to the old beliefs if they weren't the best rules for the game. Right?

THE PAIN AND THE PAYOFF

Well, I suggest that in 2008, we embark or re-commit ourselves to continue on a quest for the invisible game.

Here's the pain:

Again, some of the things you may be required to believe about the real game have been branded and stigmatized as being so outlandish and crazy that you'd have to be insane to willingly suffer the slings and arrows of public condemnation if you consider adopting them.

Here's the payoff: If you understand the invisible game, then the visible game gets a whole lot easier. If you understand what's really going on, then you can be pre-emptive in your actions. If you understand where to look for answers, then you can never be lost for too long. If you recognize where power exists, you can tap into it and get on with the real game for which you game.

So why should you choose to adopt a new set of beliefs? If your life is exactly the way you wish it be, then there's no reason to entertain a new belief system really. If, however, you dream of living a different sort of life, then perhaps there is reason to begin a search for a more effective set of beliefs about the world. Don't worry, I'll be here to help!

As this is an introduction to this new way of thinking I'll keep it "enlightenment light" just to whet the appetites of those interested in learning more. But beware: Truth is not for the faint-hearted. Stay tuned.

[Excerpted and adapted from The Great Sheep Uprising, Book 2: Lessons for the Lambs]

■ ■ ■

Until next week, remember, success is a journey, not a destination!

Walt F.J. Goodridge is author of 12 books including Turn Your Passion Into Profit. *Walt offers coaching and workshops to help people pursue and profit from their passions. Originally from the island of Jamaica, Walt has grown several successful businesses in the US, and now makes his home here in Saipan. To learn more about the Saipanpreneur Project and Walt's philosophy and formula visit www.saipanpreneur.com and www.passionprofit.com.*

Letters to the Editor

More nurses desperate for license verification and other services

This is in response to the letter to the editor by Mario Apurado Jr. titled "Nurse desperate for license verification." I totally agree with this guy since two of my cousins here are nurses working at CHC and I have many other relatives who are RN Licensed under the Commonwealth Board of Nurse Examiners.

I think I also need to voice out our sentiments regarding the poor services our Board of Nursing here is giving people. Our Board of Nursing here, also known as Commonwealth of Board of Nurse Examiners (CBNE), is at par with CUC and other government offices when it comes to customer service despite the high volume of applicants paying good money to get the service done. One application costs about $80 and every time we go there we see tons of application coming mostly from the Philippines. That office is definitely doing good to this government but in return providing the worst customer service ever! Believe it or not, CBNE has only one staff to do the entire job. No wonder the service is so sloppy. When we ask her why, she said the government can't afford to hire additional staff. This is totally unbelievable! According to her, there are times that their phone line is cut due to non-payment of bills. This is outrageous! I think the CNMI government should pay attention to this one rather than doing other no-brainer things.

It's a shame if the National Council of State Board of Nurses (the mother of all Board of Nursing in US) hears about this issue. It would probably impose a suspension to CBNE and that's not good for the CNMI. The CNMI is already messed up! Good thing this guy Mario Apurado Jr. didn't send his letter to NCSBN or did he?

Canary Miguel
Garapan, Saipan

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Mostly sunny with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲82° ▼75°	▲82° ▼75°	▲82° ▼76°	▲83° ▼76°	▲82° ▼75

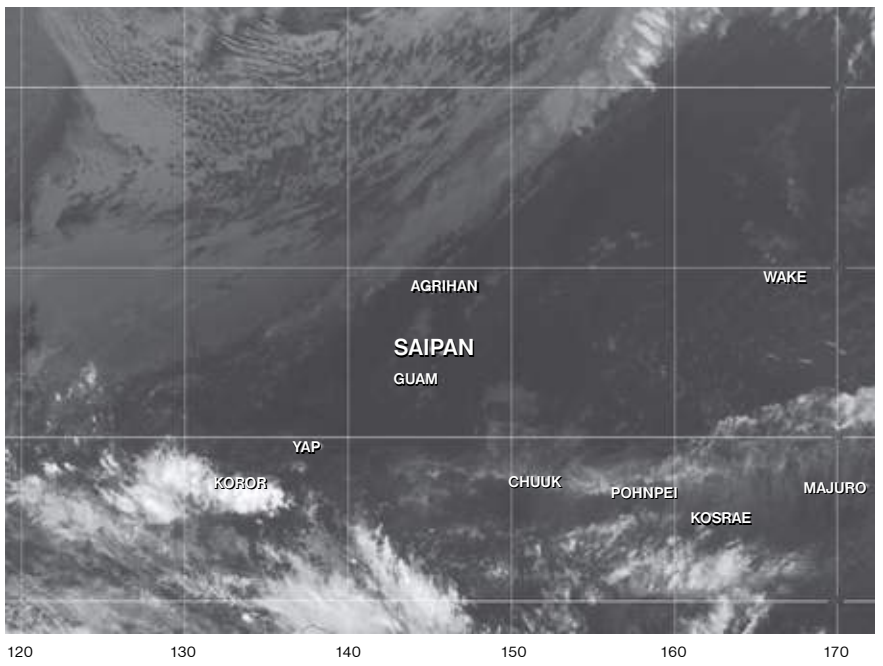
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Partly Sunny	▲84	▼75
Palau	Mostly Sunny	▲87	▼78
Yap	Partly Sunny	▲89	▼77
Chuuk	Partly Sunny	▲89	▼80
Pohnpei	Mostly Sunny	▲87	▼77
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲89	▼77
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	▲84	▼76

Around The Globe

Auckland	Mostly Sunny	▲73	▼61
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲41	▼25
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	▲68	▼57
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲78	▼69
London	Rain/Snow	▲42	▼33
Los Angeles	Partly Sunny	▲69	▼50
Manila	Showers	▲84	▼75
Melbourne	Partly Sunny	▲87	▼68
Miami	Mostly Sunny	▲64	▼51
New York	Cloudy	▲32	▼19
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	▲44	▼30
Paris	Cloudy	▲36	▼32
Pusan	Sunny	▲41	▼28
Rome	Showers	▲47	▼46
Salem	Cloudy	▲44	▼36
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	▲60	▼50
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲32	▼21
Tokyo	Partly Sunny	▲49	▼34
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲35	▼23

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, TUESDAY, JAN. 1, 2008
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends from 25N150E southwestward to 20N142E then continues as a shear line to 15N130E and beyond. Widespread cloudiness and areas of light rain and showers are found along and up to 300 miles northwest of this boundary. A near-equatorial trough stretches from 5N130E to 1N144E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are occurring just south of Palau in the area bounded by 9N130E to 6N134E to 6N137E to 4N130E back to 9N130E and well south of Yap between the equator and 2N from 136E to 145E. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers within 75 miles either side of a line from 4N155E to 2N162E to 6N180. This is south of Pohnpei, Kosrae and Majuro.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
03:57AM Today	High Tide:	1.3 Feet
08:18AM Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
02:25PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
10:12PM Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:43AM	5:58PM
Thursday	6:44AM	5:59PM
Friday	6:44AM	5:59PM
Saturday	6:44AM	6:00PM
Sunday	6:45AM	6:00PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	01:16AM	01:02PM
Thursday	02:04AM	01:40PM
Friday	02:54AM	02:22PM
Saturday	03:47AM	03:07PM
Sunday	04:40AM	03:57PM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contribution are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 25, 2007

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Guam

CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	1,2,4,5,6,7
CO9597	8:30am	9:20am	1,2,5,6
CO9313	8:30am	10:00am	3,4,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	Daily
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Saipan-Seoul

OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:30pm	7:00pm	2,4,6,7

Saipan-Busan

OZ 608	4:00am	7:35am	1,4,5,7

Guam-Manila

CO 891	6:00am	10:30am	3 via Yap and Koror
CO 893	6:30am	8:05am	6
CO 893	8:25am	10:00am	2
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:45am	1,2,4,6,7

Saipan-Manila

CO 895	4:45pm	6:35pm	6
CO 895	6:45pm	8:35pm	3

Saipan-Nagoya

NW 078	8:30am	11:10am	Daily

Guam-Nagoya

CO 971	7:45am	10:30am	1,2,4,5,6,7
NW 023	4:15pm	7:05pm	Daily
CO 904	4:35pm	7:25pm	Daily

Saipan-Narita

NW 078	8:30am	1:30pm	Daily via Nagoya
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily

Guam-Narita

JO 982	4:15am	7:00am	Daily
CO 961	7:20am	9:55am	Daily
CO 006	1:00pm	3:45pm	Daily
JO 942	3:30pm	6:15pm	Daily
NW 081	3:55pm	6:50pm	Daily
NW 073	4:15pm	7:00pm	Daily
CO 963	4:50pm	7:30pm	Daily

Saipan-Osaka

NW 083	4:30pm	7:15pm	1,2,3,5,6,7

Guam-Hongkong

CO 910	7:45pm	10:40pm	1,5

Saipan-Guanzhou

CZ 3008	5:00am	8:00am	2,6

Saipan-Rota

CO 9313	8:30am	9:05am	3,4,7

Rota-Guam

CO 9313	9:30am	10:00am	3,4,7

ARRIVALS

Guam-Saipan

CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,4,5,6,7
CO 9316	3:30am	4:20am	2
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9598	10:15am	11:45am	1,2,6 via Rota
CO9600	10:45am	11:35am	3,4,5,7
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Seoul-Saipan

OZ 605	9:00am	2:30pm	2,4,6,7
OZ 603	7:40pm	10:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
OZ 607	6:50pm	2:50am+1	3,7 via Busan
OZ 607	7:30pm	2:50am+1	4 via Busan

Busan-Saipan

OZ 607	9:30pm	2:50am+1	3,4,6,7

Manila-Guam

CO 894	11:20am	4:55pm	2
CO 894	7:45pm	1:20am+1	6
CO 892	9:45pm	5:25am+1	3 via Koror
CO 892	9:45pm	6:30am+1	3 via Koror and Yap
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7

Manila-Saipan

CO 890	9:15am	2:55pm	6
CO 890	11:45am	5:35pm	3

Nagoya-Saipan

NW 077	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily

Nagoya-Guam

NW 024	10:00am	2:40pm	Daily
CO 970	11:30am	4:00pm	Daily
CO 905	8:25pm	12:50am+1	1,3,4,5,6,7

Narita-Saipan

NW 076	10:35am	3:05pm	Daily
NW 077	6:15pm	1:10am+1	Daily via Nagoya

Narita-Guam

JO 941	9:30am	2:05pm	Daily
NW 074	9:45am	2:25pm	Daily
CO 962	11:05am	3:35pm	Daily
CO 007	5:15pm	9:50pm	Daily
NW 082	8:30pm	1:15am+1	Daily
CO 964	8:40pm	1:15am+1	Daily
JO 981	9:30pm	2:05am+1	Daily

Osaka-Saipan

NW 084	10:40am	3:20pm	1,2,3,5,6,7

Hongkong-Guam

CO 910	11:40pm	6:20am+1	1,5

Guanzhou-Saipan

CZ 3007	8:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5

Rota-Saipan

CO 9598	11:10am	11:45am	1,2,6

Guam-Rota

CO 9598	10:15am	10:45am	1,2,6

(Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana. ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Business

STOCK Portfolio

ASIAN MARKETS

AUSTRALIA
6,421.0000
Down 2.700
(-0.04%)

HONG KONG
27,812.65
Up 442.05
(+1.62%)

JAKARTA
2,745.8259
Up 6.12
(+0.22%)

TOKYO
15,307.78
Down 256.91
(-1.65%)

K. LUMPUR
1,445.03
Down 2.01
(-0.14%)

MANILA
3,621.60
Down 46.04
(-1.26%)

SINGAPORE
3,482.30
Up 36.48
(+1.06%)

SEOUL
1,897.13
Down 11.49
(-0.60%)

BANGKOK
630.73
Up 3.86
(+0.62%)

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW
13,264.82
-0.76

NASDAQ
2,652.28
-0.83

S&P
1,468.36
-0.69

MONEY MARKET

Australian Dollar	1.1429
British Pound	0.5019
Canadian Dollar	0.9985
Chinese Renmbi	7.304
Euro	0.6851
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8005
Indian Rupee	39.43
Indonesian Rupiah	9390
Japanese Yen	111.75
Malaysian Ringgit	3.307
New Zealand Dollar	1.3063
Philippine Peso	41.23
Singapore Dollar	0.7178
South Korean Won	934.55
Swiss Franc	1.133
Taiwan Dollar	32.435
Thailand Baht	29.75

In U.S. dollar terms

Source: Associated Press

Oil traders eye $100 crude next year

NEW YORK (AP)—Oil prices ended the year near $96 a barrel, or 57 percent higher than where they began, and analysts expect rising demand and geopolitical instability to keep upward pressure on energy costs early in 2008.

"There's a good chance this week that we'll see some record highs," Jim Ritterbusch, president of Ritterbusch and Associates in Galena, Ill., said.

A record-breaking year for energy futures ended quietly on Monday, with oil futures declining 2 cents to settle at $95.98 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Oil reached a trading record of $99.29 on Nov. 21, and remains close to the range of inflation-adjusted highs set in early 1980. Depending on how the adjustment is calculated, $38 a barrel then would be worth $96 to $103 or more today.

Crude futures averaged $72.41 in 2007, compared with $66.25 in 2006, and had their the biggest percentage gain since 1999, when prices more than doubled to $25.60 a barrel.

Crude futures surged in 2007 as demand from booming economies in Asia surged while American motorists continued to hit the road in record numbers, sending gas prices above $3 a gallon for the 3rd straight year. Other factors influencing energy prices were the West's standoff with Iran over its nuclear program, attacks by Nigerian rebels on that oil-rich nation's crude infrastructure and Turkish attacks on Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq, which sparked concerns that the rebels would retaliate by attacking an oil pipeline. The recent assassination of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto has exacerbated worries about global instability.

Pump prices averaged $2.79 a gallon in 2007, compared with $2.57 a gallon in 2006, a gain of 8.6 percent. Higher prices are cutting demand growth. The Energy Department's Energy Information Administration recently cut its global demand growth projections for oil to 87.2 million barrels a day from an earlier forecast of 87.5 million barrels a day. The EIA left domestic gasoline demand growth projections for next year unchanged at 1 percent.

At the same time, the EIA estimated that oil prices will average nearly $85 a barrel in 2008, while gasoline prices will average $3.11 a gallon, peaking above $3.40 a gallon in the spring.

For oil companies, this hasn't been the bonanza one would expect. Oil companies buy the oil they refine into gasoline, diesel and heating oil, meaning they suffer if the price of those products doesn't keep up with the price of oil. And while all three products rose sharply in price this year, those increases lagged oil's spurt.

The nation's three largest oil companies, Exxon Mobil Corp., Chevron Corp. and ConocoPhillips, had combined profits of $50.3 billion in the first nine months of the year, a decline of 8.5 percent from a year earlier.

Stocks fall on last day of 2007

NEW YORK (AP)—Wall Street ended a painful year with another steep loss Monday as investors glumly anticipated that 2008 would bring more of the uncertainty and turbulence of 2007.

The Dow Jones industrials fell 101 points, the latest in a string of triple-digit moves that became commonplace in the just-ended year amid a continuum of bad news about housing, faltering mortgages and shrinking credit. Thanks to a big first-half advance, they managed to finish 2007 with a respectable increase of 6.43 percent—not as large as the 16.29 percent jump in 2006, but a better performance than the modest loss in 2005.

The Dow's annual gain came even after it posted its worst fourth-quarter drop in 20 years, amid billion-dollar losses at the world's biggest financial firms and falling spending by consumers whose budgets have been crimped by record-high oil prices and declining home prices.

"Considering all that's going on, the market really acted pretty well," said Todd Leone, managing director of equity trading at Cowen & Co.

It's tough to say what the primary market driver of 2008 will be, but the stock market faces a slew of threats: more adjustable-rate mortgage resets, a still-tight credit market and the possibility of accelerating inflation. But Leone said the fourth-quarter earnings season in January should shed some light on how U.S. companies are surviving the recent slowdown and credit crunch.

AP

Standard & Poor's 500 Futures trader Anthony M. Mazur Jr., continues to trade as confetti falls marking the end of the 2007 trading year in Chicago, Monday, Dec. 31, 2007.

There was more downbeat news on housing Monday. The National Association of Realtors said November existing home sales rose 0.4 percent to an annual rate of 5 million—the first rise in nine months. However, sales are 20 percent below where they were a year ago, and the median existing home price has dropped 3.3 percent over the past 12 months.

Asian markets strong in 2007

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Asian stock markets had a strong, if volatile, year with China leading the pack as investors bet on the region's continued growth prospects.

Several exchanges notched gains of more than 20 percent and among Asia's major markets, only Japan and New Zealand ended the year with losses.

But the outlook for 2008 remained clouded by soaring oil prices, accelerating inflation in both China and India, and above all, the health of the U.S. economy.

"More will be revealed after one or two months of data on the U.S. side to see what's the state of the U.S. economy, especially the consumer spending," said Song Seng Wun, chief executive of CIMB-GK Research Pte. Ltd. in Singapore.

"If (the U.S. economy) can hold, then we should be reasonably intact," Song said.

The Shanghai Composite Index climbed 96.7 percent on the year, the world's best performing major bourse for 2007. Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 11.1 percent and the benchmark NZX-50 in New Zealand fell 0.3 percent.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Existing home sales edge up 0.4 percent

WASHINGTON (AP)—Sales of previously owned homes nudged up in November, but that didn't improve the broader picture of a feeble housing market racked by record-high foreclosures and harder-to-get credit. The National Association of Realtors reported Monday that sales of existing single-family homes, condominiums and townhouses rose 0.4 percent in November from October, to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5 million units. Even with the small increase, the pace of sales was still the second-lowest on record going back to 1999. The lowest pace—4.98 million—was registered in October. Home prices continued to sink. The median price of a home sold last month was $210,200. That marked a 3.3 percent drop from a year ago.

Record data breaches in 2007, groups say

BOSTON (AP)—The loss or theft of personal data such as credit card and Social Security numbers soared to unprecedented levels in 2007, and the trend isn't expected to turn around anytime soon as hackers stay a step ahead of security and laptops disappear with sensitive information. And while companies, government agencies, schools and other institutions are spending more to protect ever-increasing volumes of data with more sophisticated firewalls and encryption, the investment often is too little too late. The Theft Resource Center lists more than 79 million records reported compromised in the United States through Dec. 18. That's a nearly fourfold increase from the nearly 20 million records reported in all of 2006. Another group, Attrition.org, estimates more than 162 million records compromised through Dec. 21 - both in the U.S. and overseas, unlike the other group's U.S.-only list. Attrition reported 49 million last year.

Cyprus, Malta convert to euro

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP)—EU newcomers Cyprus and Malta adopted the euro Tuesday, bringing to fifteen the number of countries using the currency with increasing clout over the slumping U.S. dollar. The Mediterranean islands, both former British colonies, scrapped the Cyprus pound and Maltese lira at midnight. Maltese Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi had to wait a little before getting his hands on the new currency. An automated teller machine did not work when Gonzi tried to withdraw euros, and he was obliged to use a different ATM. Both countries welcomed the euro with outdoor celebrations, including a fireworks display in Malta's rainy capital Valletta.

Nation

Times Square revelers welcome 2008

By ROGER PETTERSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—New Year's Eve revelers converged on Times Square to watch the dropping of a new energy-efficient ball, while gay couples in New Hampshire awaited the stroke of midnight to take advantage of a new law allowing civil unions. More than a million revelers jammed the area Monday night for the 100th anniversary of the Times Square ball drop despite temperatures in the 30s. Performances by Miley Cyrus, Lenny Kravitz, Kid Rock and others kept the crowds entertained.

Milwaukee resident Jennelle Joset and her mother, Wanda Bowers, had been standing around since 1 p.m., wearing hats with big plastic wheels of cheese to show their Wisconsin pride.

"I had to do this once, to see it once before I die," Bowers said.

The first ball was an iron-and-wood contraption lit with 100 25-watt incandescent bulbs, but the Waterford crystal-clad star of this year's extravaganza was lit up with 9,576 tiny LEDs that organizers said would draw about as much electricity as 10 toasters. Philips Lighting, which made the light-emitting diodes, said they would be more than twice as bright as last year's energy-hungry lights and are capable of generating more than 16 million colors.

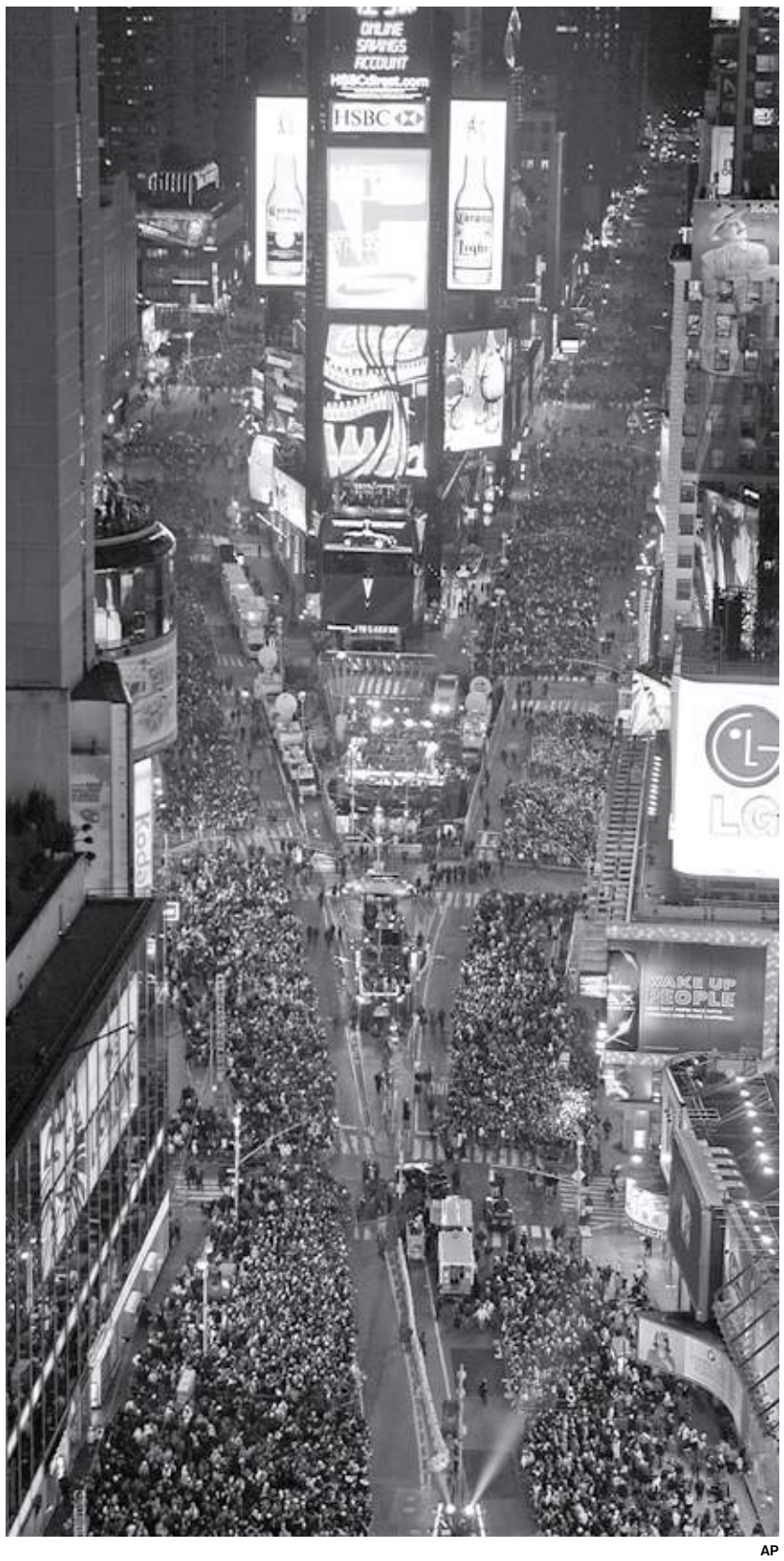
A different sort of light show was set in Brooksville, Fla., where the ball being dropped was a 200-pound fiberglass tangerine, with light bulbs inside. And in downtown Miami, the Big Orange will slowly climb to the top of the Hotel Inter-Continental, followed by a laser and fireworks show.

About a million people were expected for the 32nd First Night celebration in Boston. The party lineup included a half-dozen ice sculptures around the city, each weighing 30 to 45 tons, performances by hundreds of artists, and a midnight fireworks display over Boston Harbor.

Authorities in several cities including Phoenix, Dallas and Detroit pleaded with residents not to ring in the new year by shooting bullets skyward. Emergency Medical Service technicians in New Orleans even planned to don combat helmets made from the same fiber used in bullet-resistant vests for the second straight year.

The Chicago Transit Authority continued its New Year's Eve tradition of offering penny fares on buses and trains as thousands were expected to head to the city's fireworks shows on Navy Pier. Philadelphia also had a huge fireworks display planned, with 4,000 fireworks shells scheduled to explode over the Delaware River.

More than 300,000 people were expected to crowd the Las Vegas Strip and downtown resorts for the countdown to midnight. They were expected to spend more than $200 million in restaurants, theaters and clubs—with a big chunk of that going to the hefty door charge, usually around $250, at the Strip's slick nightclubs.



AP

Crowds gather at Times Square for New Years eve in New York, Monday, Dec. 31, 2007.

ACROSS THE NATION

Woman who tried to shoot Ford freed

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Sara Jane Moore, who took a shot at President Ford in a bizarre assassination attempt just 17 days after a disciple of Charles Manson tried to kill Ford, was paroled Monday after 32 years behind bars. Moore, 77, was released from the federal prison in Dublin, east of San Francisco, where she had been serving a life sentence, the Bureau of Prisons said. Bureau spokeswoman Felicia Ponce said she had no details on why Moore was let out. But she said that with good behavior, inmates sentenced to life can apply for parole after 10 years. Moore was 40 feet away from Ford outside a hotel in San Francisco when she fired a shot at him on Sept. 22, 1975. As she raised her .38-caliber revolver and pulled the trigger, Oliver Sipple, a disabled former Marine standing next to her, pushed up her arm. The bullet flew over Ford's head by several feet.

Police: Drunken driver kills 5 in Ohio

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP)—A drunken driver went about four miles down a highway in the wrong direction before his pickup truck slammed into a minivan, killing a woman and four children and injuring three others, police said Monday. Michael Gagnon, 24, drove north in the southbound lane of Interstate 280 late Sunday, colliding with the minivan and leaving scattered toys, stuffed animals and bits of gift wrap along the edge of the road, Toledo police said. An 8-week-old girl was among those killed. Gagnon had a blood-alcohol level of .254 after the crash, more than three times Ohio's legal limit of .08, police said. He was charged Monday with aggravated vehicular homicide.

2 Marines ordered to court-martial

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A Marine will be court-martialed on reduced charges in the killings of 24 Iraqi men, women and children in the town of Haditha in 2005, the Marine Corps announced Monday. Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich, 27, of Meriden, Conn., will stand trial on charges of voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, reckless endangerment, dereliction of duty and obstruction of justice. No trial date was set. More serious charges of unpremeditated murder, as well as charges of soliciting another to commit an offense and making a false official statement, were dismissed by the Marine Corps. Wuterich's prosecution is part of the biggest U.S. criminal case involving civilian deaths to come out of the Iraq war.

Passenger with TB in Calif. hospital

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Health officials were searching Monday for dozens of airline passengers who may have come in contact with a 30-year-old woman infected with a hard-to-treat form of tuberculosis on a flight from India. The 30-year-old woman, who authorities declined to identify, was being treated at a Bay Area hospital. Officials said the chances that she had infected anyone else were minimal. The woman arrived in San Francisco on Dec. 13 aboard an American Airlines flight that she boarded in New Delhi. The flight stopped in Chicago before continuing to San Francisco International. "She did have symptoms on the flight," said Santa Clara County Health Director Dr. Marty Fenstersheib. "She was coughing." Health officials said she was diagnosed with TB in India, but boarded the flight anyway.

Clinton, Obama claim $100 million raised

WASHINGTON (AP)—Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton will have raised more than $100 million this year for her presidential campaign, aides confirmed Monday evening, setting a historic new threshold in fundraising.

Rival Barack Obama's campaign indicated it had reached that record-setting mark as well. In a Power Point presentation to supporters, Obama campaign manager David Plouffe, said the campaign would need "at least $100 million" to compete in the first 26 primary and caucus states. "Obama will have the financial resources," Plouffe said.

Clinton aides said her figure did not include $10 million she transferred to the campaign from her Senate campaign account at the beginning of the year. That means the senator from New York will have raised more than $20 million during the past three months.

Neither the Clinton nor the Obama campaigns revealed how much of the money raised was designated for the primary phase of the campaign and how much was for the general election - an important distinction that would signal how much they have available to compete for the Democratic nomination.

In the first three quarters, Obama raised more primary money than Clinton.

Clinton had $90.9 million in receipts at the end of September, including the $10 million transfer. By that time, she had raised a total of $80.4 million.

Monday at midnight was the last day of the fundraising quarter. Campaigns won't have to make details of their fundraising and spending public until Jan. 31, when they file finance reports with the Federal Election Commission.

Northeast braces for new wave of snow

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—Residents in parts of the Northeast braced Monday for the second winter storm in as many days, testing weather records and motorists' patience but delighting operators of ski resorts. The storm could dump as much as 9 inches of snow in higher elevations of upstate New York and northern New England on Tuesday, adding a new coating to the foot or more that has already fallen in spots.

"A good portion of the Northeast is going to get in on this second storm," said National Weather Service meteorologist Brian Frugis.

The earlier storm dropped 11 inches of snow in the Albany area and more than a foot in central New Hampshire. Concord saw 10.1 inches, beating its December record—43 inches in 1876—by an inch and a half.

Drivers on some side roads had to slow to a crawl because fluffy snow higher than their bumpers flowed up onto their hoods and windshields.

Snow also fell Monday in Michigan and central Illinois. A 22-year-old man in Michigan died when his car slid through a stop sign, and 180 flights were canceled at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

In Vermont, where it's been snowing almost nonstop since Thanksgiving, as much as 7 inches fell overnight.

"It's a wonderful thing," said Eric Bowker, executive director of Catamount Outdoor Family Center in Williston, which offers cross-country ski trails, snowshoeing and sledding.

"It's been quite a while since we've had this much snow this early in the season. During Christmas-New Year's holiday is a big bonus for us. If people see early snow, they're much more likely to buy a membership," he said.

At Sunday River in Newry, Maine, spokesman Alex Kaufman put December's total at 74 inches and counting, with another 6 to 12 inches expected Tuesday.

"Happy New Year indeed!" Kaufman said. "Unreal."

In Maine, it was the snowiest December in more than a decade. The Weather Service said the Bangor area had more than 34 inches for the month as of Sunday, compared with a normal December total of about 13 inches. Only 2 1/2 inches fell in the area last year.

Asia

Bhutto video, medical report raise doubt

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Aides to Benazir Bhutto charge that lax security allowed an assassin to approach within a few yards of her. But authorities insist it was her decision to open a hatch in her bombproof vehicle and chat with supporters that left her vulnerable.

The dispute intensified as a video of the attack and an inconclusive medical report raised new doubts about the official explanation of her death and bolstered calls for an independent, international investigation.

The new video footage, obtained by Britain's Channel 4 television, shows a man firing a pistol at Bhutto from just feet away as she poked her head out of the sunroof to greet a swarm of supporters. Her hair and shawl then jerked upward and she fell into the vehicle just before an explosion—apparently detonated by a second man—rocked the car.

No police were seen trying to push the crowd away.

Bhutto, who died Thursday in a gun and suicide bomb attack, reveled in personal campaigning, a trait that fueled her popularity but posed a challenge for her security forces.

"She was a very brave lady and sometimes when you see the supporters and cheering crowds there is a tendency not to heed the security department, and that's exactly what happened, unfortunately," Interior Ministry spokesman Javed Iqbal Cheema said.

Even before Bhutto returned to Pakistan in October from eight years in exile, she was warned about suicide squads. At her homecoming parade in Karachi, twin bombers struck her convoy, killing about 150 people, some of them the police assigned to protect her.

But she complained bitterly in recent months that the government of President Pervez Musharraf was not giving her proper protection and ignoring specific security requests.

"I have been made to feel insecure by his (Musharraf's) minions," she wrote in an October e-mail.

Bhutto, a former prime minister who was leading her party into parliamentary elections, had blamed elements in the ruling party for the threats against her. The government said an al-Qaida-linked militant leader orchestrated her killing Thursday, a claim both the militant and Bhutto's aides rejected.

At the Rawalpindi rally where Bhutto was slain, hundreds of police ringed the park where she spoke, frisking those entering and making most pass through metal detectors. Police snipers were in at least four positions on nearby rooftops. A 10-yard area was cordoned off in front of the stage, which was inspected by security officials, inspected by bomb-sniffing dogs, and flanked by armed, plainclothes guards.

"There were ample security arrangements there," Rawalpindi police chief Saud Aziz said.

US provided Bhutto with security intel

WASHINGTON (AP)—The United States provided a steady stream of intelligence to Benazir Bhutto about threats against her before the former Pakistani prime minister was assassinated and advised her aides on how to boost security, although key suggestions appear to have gone unheeded, U.S. officials said Monday.

Senior U.S. diplomats had multiple conversations, including at least two private face-to-face meetings, with top members of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party to discuss threats on the Pakistani opposition leader's life and review her security arrangements after a suicide bombing marred her initial return to Pakistan from exile in October, the officials told The Associated Press.

The intelligence was also shared with the Pakistani government, the officials said.

Much of what was passed on dealt with general threats from Taliban extremists and al-Qaida sympathizers and "was not actionable information."

The officials said Bhutto and her aides were concerned, particularly after the October attack, but were adamant that in the absence of a specific and credible threat there would be few, if any, changes to her campaign schedule ahead of parliamentary elections.

"She knew people were trying to assassinate her," said an intelligence official. "We don't hold information back on possible attacks on foreign leaders and foreign countries." The official added, however, that while the U.S. could share the information, "it's up to (the recipient) how they want to take action."

"We gave them a steady stream of intelligence," one official said.

The officials spoke to AP on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter and amid widespread disbelief over the Pakistani government's assertion that Bhutto died not from bullet or shrapnel wounds but from injuries sustained while hitting her head on her vehicle's sunroof during Thursday's attack by a suicide bomber and gunman.

110 US troops die in Afghanistan in 2007

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—U.S. military deaths, suicide bombings and opium production hit record highs in 2007. Taliban militants killed more than 925 Afghan police, and large swaths of the country remain outside government control.

But U.S. officials here insist things are looking up: The Afghan army is assuming a larger combat role, and militants appear unlikely to mount a major spring offensive, as had been feared a year ago. Training for Afghan police is increasing.

Still, six years after the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, violence persists in much of southern Afghanistan where the government has little presence, and recent militant attacks in Pakistan highlight a long-term regional problem with al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Civilian deaths caused by U.S. and NATO forces in the first half of the year rattled the government, and more foreign fighters flowed into the country.

Taliban fighters avoided head-on battles with U.S., NATO and Afghan army forces in 2007, resorting instead to ambushes and suicide bombings, but militants attacked the weakest of Afghan forces to devastating effect.

More than 925 Afghan policemen died in Taliban ambushes in 2007, including 16 killed Saturday during an assault on a Helmand province checkpoint.

"The Taliban attack whom they perceive to be the most vulnerable, and in this case it's the police," said Lt. Col. Dave Johnson, a spokesman for the U.S. troops who train Afghan police and soldiers. "They don't travel in large formations like the army does. That puts them in an area of vulnerability."

AP

A man sifts thru the debris beside a big hole on the wall after a fire destroyed stores selling pyrotechnics Monday, Dec. 31, 2007 in Bocaue town in Bulacan province, north of Manila, Philippines.

RP fire injures 3, sets off panic

BOCAUE, Philippines (AP)—A fire Monday destroyed nine firecracker stalls north of Manila, injuring at least three people and sparking panic among shoppers making last-minute purchases of firecrackers to welcome the new year, officials said.

The one-hour fire ignited stacks of firecrackers, causing dark-gray smoke to billow into the sky and sending flaming debris that injured two bystanders in Bocaue, known as the country's firecracker capital, fire marshal Absalon Zipagan said.

Another villager suffered bruises when he fell to the ground while scampering to safety. The blasts also damaged two parked vans and a motorcycle, Zipagan said.

Investigators suspect the fire was accidentally lit by a cigarette or reckless testing of firecrackers in an alley of stalls, he said.

"They sounded like bombs," businesswoman Rebecca Santiago told The Associated Press, describing the firecracker blasts, which shattered glass windows in her three-story building.

Santiago said that when she saw one stall catch fire she rushed to bring her three grandchildren out of her nearby building to safety. As they ran away, she heard successive blasts from the burning stalls that shook the ground.

TV footage showed two villagers trying to douse the fire in two stalls with extinguishers. A powerful explosion later rocked a nearby stall, prompting them to run away with fleeing shoppers. Some villagers snapped pictures of the inferno, while village guards directed traffic away.

Despite warnings by Philippine health officials, many superstitious Filipinos continue to usher in the new year with powerful firecrackers, believing that noisy celebrations—largely influenced by Chinese tradition—drive away evil and misfortune.

More than 900 people were injured by firecrackers and gunfire during celebrations a year ago between Christmas 2006 and new year 2007.

This season the Health Department has recorded 134 people injured so far by firecrackers and one by a stray bullet since Dec. 21 despite authorities' crackdown on powerful firecrackers and celebratory firing of guns.

NKorea misses nuke declaration deadline

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea failed to meet a year-end deadline to declare all its nuclear programs under an aid-for-disarmament deal, prompting disappointed reactions Monday from South Korea, the United States and Japan.

The three countries, along with China and Russia, have been pushing North Korea to abandon its nuclear programs in a series of negotiations that began in 2003 and finally gained momentum in 2007.

Washington and Seoul have said they believe the overall disarmament process, though falling behind schedule, is still on track.

China and Russia were silent on the issue. North Korean state media made no mention of the missed deadline, but the North renewed its call for Washington to scrap unfriendly policies toward the communist regime.

"The source of war should be removed and lasting peace be ensured," the North said in the message carried by the official Korean Central News Agency. "An end should be put to the U.S. policy hostile towards (North Korea)."

The North also said the armistice signed at the close of the 1950-53 Korean War should be replaced by a peace treaty. The lack of a formal treaty ending the conflict means the Korean peninsula still remains technically at war.

It said the North would "make earnest efforts for stability on the Korean peninsula and peace in the world" and that the country is ready to develop "relations of friendship and cooperation with all the countries that are friendly toward it."

The message, published in the form of a joint editorial by three major North Korean newspapers, also called for strengthening the country's military force, but stopped short of calling for boosting nuclear capabilities.

World

World welcomes New Year with fireworks

By ANGELA DOLAND
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PARIS (AP)—A million revelers cheered fireworks in Sydney. Summer Olympics organizers hosted dance and music in Beijing. And rare celebrations resounded in war-torn Baghdad.

Across the globe, people gathered for parties, shot off fireworks and held out hopes for a peaceful and prosperous 2008.

But reminders of violence were apparent as security was tightened in many nations.

Fireworks were canceled in downtown Brussels, Belgium, where police last week detained 14 people suspected of plotting to help an accused al-Qaida militant break out of jail.

Festivities in Paris centered on the famous Champs-Elysees avenue and the Eiffel Tower, where about 4,500 police and 140 rescue officials patrolled the streets.

In Thailand, an army spokesman said he believed that five bombs set off by suspected Muslim insurgents in a Thai-Malaysian border tourist town likely targeted New Year's revelers. The bombs, which wounded 27 people, exploded in the hotel and nightlife area of Sungai Kolok, spokesman Col. Akara Thiprote said.

Baghdad witnessed something Iraq had not seen since before the invasion of 2003—people publicly partying to welcome in a new year.

The ballrooms of two landmark hotels—the Palestine and the Sheraton—were full of people for New Year's Eve celebrations. After years of car bombings, mortar fire and suicide attacks, Iraq's capital was sufficiently calm to warrant the two high-end parties in the once-posh hotels.

Several European countries rang in the new year with new habits.

The smoke-filled cafe became a thing of memory in France. Following up on a ban last year on smoking in many indoor locations, cigarettes were prohibited in dance clubs, restaurants, hotels, casinos and cafes.

Fabienne Simon, a 27-year-old smoker, said the ban was "not that bad."

"There is nothing better than to go to a nightclub, a coffee place where there are no cigarettes," she said. "You come out, it's great, you aren't smelling of cigarettes."

Two European Union newcomers, Cyprus and Malta, started using the euro at the stroke of midnight. The Mediterranean islands, both former British colonies, were scrapping the Cyprus pound and Maltese lira to bring the number of countries using the shared currency to 15.

In France, President Nicolas Sarkozy gave the first traditional New Year's greeting of his presidency, with a "message of hope, faith in life and in the future." In Russia, Vladimir Putin delivered the last New Year's Eve address of his eight-year presidency, boasting of economic improvements and claiming to have restored a sense of unity among Russians, who are likely to see him stay in power as prime minister after he steps down in a few months.

In Moscow, thousands gathered in Red Square, watching a concert beneath the colorful onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral, and fireworks above.

Along with the innovations, old traditions were maintained.

Revelers in New York converged on Times Square to watch the dropping of a new energy-efficient ball. More than 300,000 people were expected to crowd the Las Vegas Strip and downtown resorts for the countdown to midnight.

In London, people gathered in Trafalgar Square and along the banks of the River Thames to watch a fireworks display and hear Big Ben—Parliament's iconic bell—welcome the New Year with 12 resounding bongs.

AP

Fireworks explode over the city skyline during the fireworks display just before New Year in Sydney, Australia, Monday, Dec. 31, 2007.

Baghdad: First New Year's in years

BAGHDAD (AP)—It was something not seen in Baghdad since before the 2003 invasion—people publicly welcoming a new year with singing, dancing and general revelry. The ballrooms of two landmark hotels—the Palestine and the Sheraton—were full of people for the first New Year's Eve celebrations after four years of violence that has bloodied Iraq.

"This place is now more secure," said Zahraa, 23, adorned with heavy black eyeliner and red lipstick, sitting with colleagues at the Palestine hotel, which was the target of huge car bombs in 2005. "Yes, we are still afraid, but we need to lighten our moods occasionally."

Like all those interviewed, she declined to give her last name, however. All cited concerns about their security, indicating worries still exist.

But after years of car bombings, mortar fire and suicide attacks, Iraq's capital was sufficiently calm to warrant the two high-end parties in the once-posh hotels.

About 200 guests, mostly men, danced to traditional Iraqi music at the large hall in the Palestine, decorated with blue, white and yellow chiffon. A woman in a glittery pink, spaghetti-strap dress sang for the crowd, which alternately hooted and danced.

At the door, a Western reporter was chastised for carrying in a can of beer: Alcohol was strictly forbidden at the parties in accordance with Islamic teachings.

But it was evident that some in the crowded ballrooms had ignored the rule. One man helped steady a friend, while other men in sport coats stood around chain-smoking cigarettes.

The singer, Fatina Wardi, also an actress for television shows and theater, said she was performing for the extra money—$250 for each show. But she also sang partly to defy rising Islamic conservatism in Iraq, she said.

In recent years, Muslim extremists have killed hairdressers, barbers and alcohol sellers—all perceived as symbols of a Western lifestyle—even though Iraq's cities were once relatively tolerant, liberal places in comparison to other areas in the Middle East.

"I've lived through four wars," Wardi said after a show, slightly slurring her words. "One either lives or dies—I choose to live and not fear death. If I die, I'll die for my country, as a martyr for freedom."

Her friends, all actresses and dancers dressed in brightly colored dresses with their hair teased out, nodded in agreement.

At the strike of midnight, the pops of gunfire spread across Baghdad, bullets streaking into the night sky—a sight that has become relatively rare the last six months as violence fell more than 80 percent in the city, according to the U.S. military.

WORLD BRIEFS

Kenyan leader warns of rampage crackdown

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—Kenya's president threatened a tough crackdown Monday as rioters rampaged for a third day to protest what they called his sham re-election—a bloody convulsion threatening what has been East Africa's most stable and prosperous democracy. At least 135 Kenyans were reported killed in violence that flared from the shantytowns of Nairobi to resort towns on the sweltering coast. Opposition leaders set the stage for more turmoil by calling for a million people to rally against President Mwai Kibaki.

UN chief warns Kosovo progress at risk

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The political impasse over Kosovo's future cannot last much longer without "putting at serious risk" all the United Nations has achieved there, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon cautioned Security Council members Monday. Ban's quarterly report to the council painted a tense portrait of daily life in Kosovo. A 1999 U.N. resolution provided that Kosovo, a province of Serbia with a population that is 90 percent ethnic Albanian, should be administered by the U.N. and NATO troops.

Hostage rescue in Colombia collapses

VILLAVICENCIO, Colombia (AP)—A Venezuelan-led mission to rescue three hostages, including a 3-year old boy, from leftist rebels in Colombia's jungles fell apart Monday as the guerrillas accused Colombia's military of sabotaging the promised handoff. Colombian President Alvaro Uribe dismissed the claim as a lie by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, instead suggesting the guerrillas could be backing out of the deal brokered by President Hugo Chavez because they don't have the boy hostage. Venezuela helicopters have been waiting since Friday for word from the guerrillas on where the hostages could be picked up.

Chavez pardons accused coup backers

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)—President Hugo Chavez granted amnesty Monday to many opponents accused of supporting a failed 2002 coup that briefly drove him from power. Chavez said he signed an amnesty decree that would also pardon others accused of attempting to overthrow his government in recent years. "It's a matter of turning the page," Chavez said in a telephone call to state television on New Year's Eve. "We would like a country that moves toward peace." Chavez read aloud the new law, which grants amnesty to those who drafted or signed a decree recognizing an interim government that briefly replaced him during the 2002 coup.

New Darfur peacekeeping force takes over

EL FASHER, Sudan (AP)—A joint African-United Nations force took over peacekeeping duties in Darfur on Monday, a long-awaited change that is intended to be the strongest effort yet to solve the world's worst humanitarian crisis. But many are already warning that its prospects are grim and that if it fails, it will only worsen the 4 1/2-year conflict, which has already killed more than 200,000 people and driven 2.5 million from their homes. The force—at 9,000 soldiers and policemen—is only a little larger than the beleaguered and ineffectual African Union peacekeeping mission it replaces. Even in the best-case scenario, it will take months to build up to its planned strength of 26,000.

Campus Life

College teaches one class at a time

LAKE GEORGE, Colo. (AP)—It's a silly old expression, but Professor Eric Leonard says it's true: The best geologist is the one who's seen the most rocks.

Which is why, on a crisp fall morning, Leonard was driving a van full of sleeping bags and sleepy-eyed Colorado College freshmen into the mountains around Pikes Peak, where the history of the Earth is writ large in giant slabs of igneous rock jutting up from the ground.

The overnight trip, and another lasting four nights a week later in Rocky Mountain National Park, offer the kind of intense, hands-on learning that the typical college lecture course rarely has.

But at Colorado College it is common because of an unusual, 35-year-old system of teaching.

Typically, full-time college students take four or five courses simultaneously, over two or three terms per year. Colorado College is one of just a handful of places where students take one course at a time, giving it their full attention for 3 1/2 weeks. They'll spend most of the day in class or on extended field trips like this one. Then, after a long weekend, they move on to the next course.

On the Colorado Springs campus of about 2,000 undergraduates, you won't see the typical college scene of students walking across the quad between classes. There's no "between."

The challenge, the private college readily admits, is to make sure students get the broad introductory knowledge they need, particularly in subjects like math and science. But the payoff is an intense learning experience that the school insists is well worth it.

"Most kids are taking courses and it's all theoretical. They don't see how it's actually occurring in the environment," said Brendan Boepple, from Wilton, Conn., perched on a sharp rock face above the South Platte River, about an hour west of campus. "We get to go out and see how it's affecting different ecosystems." He also likes having the long "block weekend" between courses when he can indulge his passion for fly fishing.

Elementary math grows exponentially tougher

By MARIA GLOD
(C) 2007, THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—Joanne Tegethoff teaches algebra. Never mind that her students carry Disney princess and Thomas the Tank Engine backpacks and have the alphabet taped on their desks. The Montgomery County, Md., first-graders one recent afternoon were learning to write "number sentences" to help Lucy Ladybug. "Lucy wakes up and puts five spots on her back," Tegethoff told the class. "Then she gets confused. She wants 10 spots. What's missing?"

Tegethoff used to teach what she called "very boring math," using worksheets of addition and subtraction problems. Now her lessons delve into algebraic thinking. By the third grade, Viers Mill Elementary students in Silver Spring, Md., are solving equations with letter variables.

Long considered a high school staple, introductory algebra is fast becoming a standard course in middle school for college-bound students. That trend is putting new pressure on such schools as Viers Mill to insert the building blocks of algebra into math lessons in the earliest grades. Disappointing U.S. scores on international math tests have added to the urgency of a movement that is rippling into kindergarten. At stake, some politicians say, is the country's ability to produce enough scientists and engineers to compete in the global economy.

But education experts say students aren't the only ones who need more rigorous instruction. Too many elementary school teachers, they say, lack the know-how to teach math effectively.

"You can't teach what you don't know, and your students won't love the subject unless you love the subject," Kenneth I. Gross, a University of Vermont mathematics and education professor, recently told a group of college mathematicians at a conference hosted by the U.S. Education Department and the National Science Foundation. "All of mathematics depends on what kids do in the elementary grades. If you don't do it right, you're doing remedial work all the way up to college. Arithmetic, algebra and geometry are intertwined."

THE WASHINGTON POST

Annika Ricci tries to work out a math problem during class at Viers Mill Elementary School in Silver Spring, Md. Elementary schools are under pressure to prepare young students for middle school algebra.

Gross and others say many elementary and middle school teachers—generalists relied on to teach reading, science and social studies and even to make sure a child's coat is zipped—are drawn to teaching by a love of children and literacy. Most had little exposure to high-level math in college and are more at home with words than numbers.

"Many of them fear math," said Vickie Inge, math outreach director with the University of Virginia's School of Continuing and Professional Studies. "Many of them had trouble with math themselves."

Educators, mathematicians and business leaders are working to bridge the knowledge gap. At an increasing number of schools, including Viers Mill, teachers work with a coach who helps boost their math knowledge, plan lessons and examine student work. The National Math & Science Initiative, funded by ExxonMobil, and the National Science Foundation are granting universities and school systems millions of dollars for programs to produce better math and science teachers.

In February, a panel of educators and mathematicians appointed by President Bush is slated to recommend ways schools can produce more algebra-savvy students. The panel will lay out skills students need to have starting in third grade to master algebra down the road. It will also recommend ways to improve teacher preparation.

Test scores released this month reignited concerns about math education in the United States. The Program for International Student Assessment found that 15-year-olds in the United States trailed peers from 23 industrialized countries in math.

What's more, Michigan State University professor William Schmidt found that U.S. teachers scored at the bottom of the pack on an algebra test in a recent study of middle school math teachers from six countries. Teachers in Korea and Taiwan, where students earn high marks on international tests, had the best scores.

"The U.S. performance was weak," Schmidt said. He found that U.S. and Mexican teachers had taken far less advanced undergraduate math courses than peers in Taiwan and Korea. He also found math knowledge isn't enough. Teachers also need strong training in instructional techniques.

In Virginia, George Mason University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech and three other universities have teamed with local K-12 systems to improve math teaching through a master's degree program in math and educational leadership for elementary and middle school teachers. The program, begun in 2002, has about 60 graduates, who have returned to their schools and become a resource for colleagues.

Virginia Commonwealth University math professor William E. Haver, who is involved in the partnership, said elementary teachers need to know far more than the standard curriculum. With a depth of knowledge, teachers can help children understand relationships between numbers and solve problems in different ways. Without it, teachers often rely on memorization and aren't well-equipped to help struggling students.

NEA report cites reading decline among older teens, young adults

By BOB THOMPSON
(C) 2007, THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—Americans are reading less and their reading proficiency is declining at troubling rates, according to a report that the National Endowment for the Arts will issue Monday. The trend is particularly strong among older teens and young adults, and if it is not reversed, the NEA report suggests, it will have a profound negative effect on the nation's economic and civic future.

"This is really alarming data," said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia. "Luckily, we still have an opportunity to address it, but if we wait 10, 20 years, I think it may be too late."

Titled "To Read or Not to Read," the report is a significant expansion of the NEA's widely cited 2004 study, "Reading at Risk." The NEA based that earlier study exclusively on data from its own arts surveys, and as a result, that analysis focused mainly on so-called literary reading—novels, stories, plays and poems. This led some critics to downplay its implications.

The new report assembles much more data, drawing on large-scale studies done by other government agencies (such as the Department of Education) and by non-government organizations. These studies tend to use broader definitions of reading, said Sunil Iyengar, the NEA's director of research and analysis, with many looking at "all kinds of reading," a category that includes reading done online.

The story the numbers tell, Gioia said, can be summed up in about four sentences:

"We are doing a better job of teaching kids to read in elementary school. But once they enter adolescence, they fall victim to a general culture which does not encourage or reinforce reading. Because these people then read less, they read less well. Because they read less well, they do more poorly in school, in the job market and in civic life."

Particularly striking, Gioia and Iyengar both said, are the declines that occur between age 9 and age 17 in reading proficiency scores and time spent reading.

The percentage of 9-year-olds who say they "read almost every day for fun," the NEA report notes, rose slightly, from 53 percent to 54 percent, between 1984 and 2004. During roughly the same time period, average reading scores for 9-year-olds rose sharply. But the percentage of 17-year-olds reading almost every day for fun dropped from 31 percent in 1984 to 22 percent in 2004, with average reading scores showing steady declines.

Iyengar emphasized that the NEA's data can show correlations but cannot prove a causal relationship between reading decline and, say, the proliferation of electronic media. Asked what he personally made of the late-teenage numbers, however, he offered a scenario likely to sound familiar to parents and educators.

Life & Style

MARCONI CALINDAS

Guests at the Club V join the fun of welcoming the new year.

MARCONI CALINDAS

PIC's Jon Cramer, right, dressed as the Year 2008, poses with a hotel guest.

CNMI welcomes 2008 with fireworks, revelry

By MARCONI CALINDAS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The CNMI welcomed the year 2008 with traditional year-end parties all over the islands, especially on Saipan.

The Hyatt Regency Saipan this year celebrated the New Year with a '60s Rock and Roll Theme. Hotel staff were clad in '60s attire, ready to do the twist that evening. A large screen showed a digital clock winding down the year 2007, adding much to the excitement.

The Saipan Grand Hotel and the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan also attracted a large chunk of guests on Saipan as it reportedly lured in over 500 guests at each hotel. Club V revelers danced until four in the morning.

The Pacific Islands Club did not fail to live up to the hype, with in house guests and local residents entertained by over 25 minutes of fireworks display.

New bars and restaurant did not fail to haul in guests during the merriment such as the Flair Bar, which attracted mostly the younger crowd on Saipan that partied until 4am. Godfathers' Bar also had a successful block party where live bands and music added to the fun in welcoming 2008.

MARCONI CALINDAS

Hyatt Regency Saipan staff pose in the '60s inspired outfits.

MARCONI CALINDAS

Party host Nola entertain the crown by dancing on top of the bar at The FLAIR Bar.

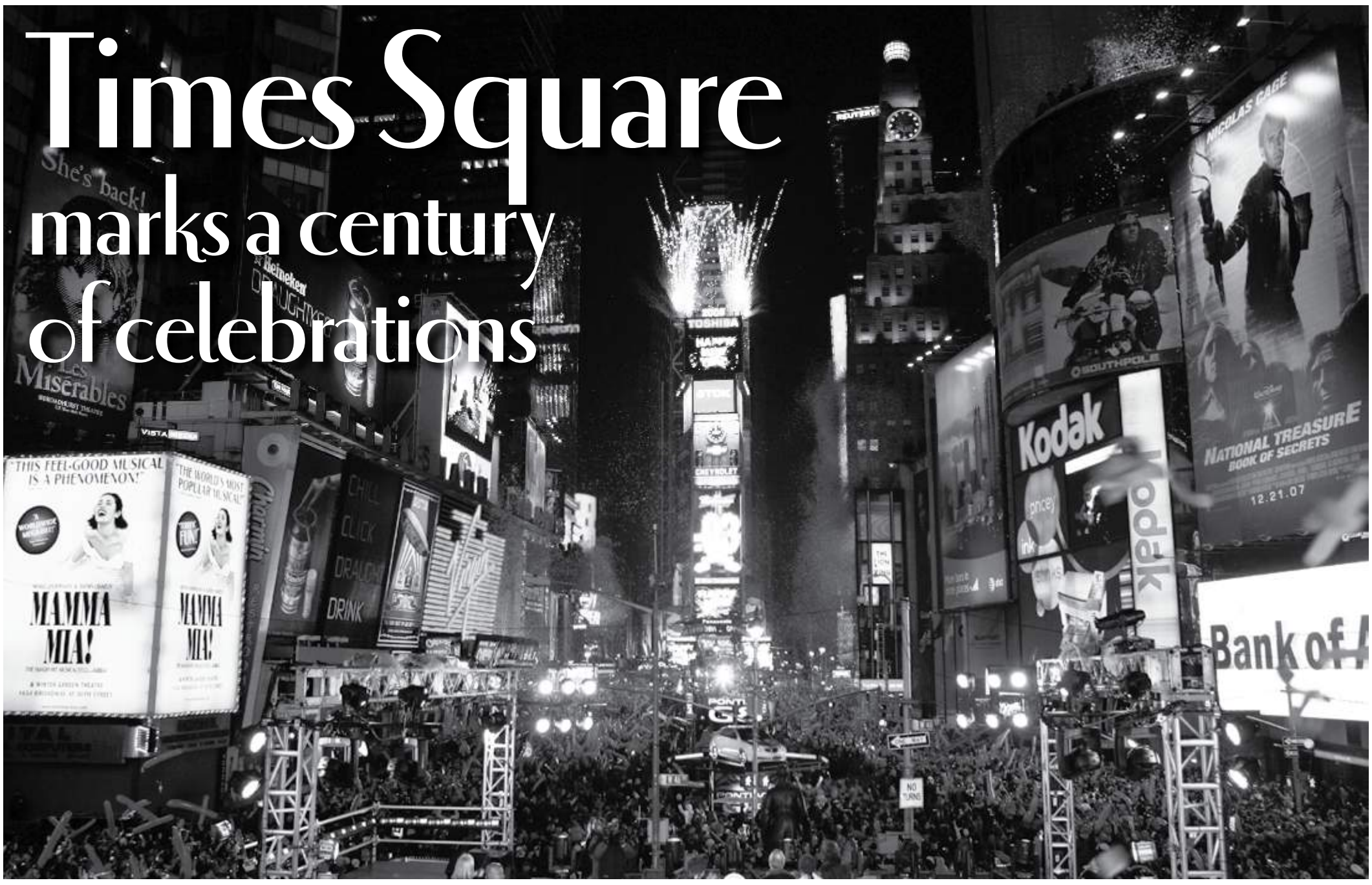
MARCONI CALINDAS

Giovanni's was festive with ribbons and party favors in the run up to 2008.

MARCONI CALINDAS

Hyatt Regency Saipan guests celebrate the New Year at the Giovanni's Restaurant.

Times Square marks a century of celebrations



Fireworks erupt from a building at the stroke of midnight during the New Year's eve celebration at Times Square in New York, Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2008. AP

By COLLEEN LONG
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—More than a million revelers in Times Square cheered as the giant crystal ball made its 100th drop and a ton of confetti rained down on the urban canyon, ushering in the new year.

University of North Carolina junior Reid Medlin, 21, attended the celebration with his friends Rachel Rand, 20, and Jeremy Crouthamel, 20. They were in the city for the first time and planned to stay up all night because they had no hotel.

"I think the best part is being here with friends," Medlin said as confetti floated down on him and people kissed around him. "This was beautiful. It makes you appreciate everything."

Rand said it did not matter that they did not have a place to sleep.

"I'm too happy to go to bed," she exclaimed.

The Times Square new year's ball tradition began a century ago with a 700-pound (317.5-kilogram) ball of wood and iron, lit with 100 25-watt incandescent bulbs. This year's event featured an energy-efficient sphere clad in Waterford crystals, with 9,576 light-emitting diodes that generated a kaleidoscope of colors.

Organizers said well over a million people attended the festivities.

They were treated to an entertainment lineup that included Dick Clark and Ryan Seacrest handling the countdown to 2008 and musical performances by Carrie Underwood, Miley Cyrus and other acts. Even New York Yankees slugger Alex Rodriguez showed up, shaking hands and posing for photos as he waited for midnight.

The Times Square Alliance, the business group running the event, handed out thousands of balloons and mittens to the crowd, which waited for hours in chilly winter weather for the main event. The confetti included pieces of paper with the new year's wishes and resolutions of people who submitted them in advance.

Diana and David Sutton, of Fort Myers, Florida, and their three young children had been waiting for the ball drop since 10 a.m. They bought plastic chairs at a nearby Toys "R" Us and bundled up with Spider-Man hats as they waited.

"It's such an experience," David Sutton said. "The kids are behaving; they're loving this. They've never seen snow before, and they got to see that, too, earlier this week."

There were strict rules for revelers: no alcohol, large bags or backpacks—and no re-entry after leaving the viewing area. The few public restrooms were closed by the afternoon.

Chase Pellegrin, 18, his sister Chandler, 13, and their parents were steps away from their hotel but did not want to lose their viewing spots.

"I'm just not drinking anything. No water, nothing. I don't want to worry about it," said Chase Pellegrin, of Covington, Louisiana, located on the opposite side of Lake Ponchartrain from New Orleans.

The first celebration in the area, in 1904, was held by New York Times owner Adolph Ochs, who was building a new headquarters in the neighborhood.

The city had just renamed the oddly shaped square in the newspaper's honor, and at midnight Ochs had pyrotechnists illuminate his building at 1 Times Square with fireworks shot from street level.

AP

Revelers celebrate in New York's Times Square shortly after midnight New Year's Day, Tuesday Jan. 1, 2008.

Three years later, when the city banned fireworks, Ochs brought in the iron and wooden ball, to be lowered from the building's flagpole at midnight.

A different sort of light show was set in Brooksville, Florida, where the ball that was dropped was a 200-pound (90-kilogram) fiberglass tangerine, with light bulbs inside.

Authorities in several cities including Phoenix, Dallas and Detroit pleaded with residents not to ring in the new year by shooting bullets skyward.

The Chicago Transit Authority continued its New Year's Eve tradition of offering penny fares on buses and trains as thousands headed to the city's fireworks shows on Navy Pier.

More than 300,000 people were expected to crowd the Las Vegas Strip and downtown resorts for the countdown to midnight. They were expected to spend more than $200 million (€135.86 million) in restaurants, theaters and clubs—with a big chunk of that going to the hefty door charge, usually around $250 (€170), at the Strip's slick nightclubs.

For that much money, patrons could see pop star Avril Lavigne, booked to host the party at the new Prive Las Vegas at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino. The Luxor's LAX scored both Hilton sisters—Nicky and Paris—for its bash.

"It's a party city, it's wild out here!" said Stephanie Smith, 21, of West Covina, California, as her friends polished off yard-long (meter-long) margaritas and walked the sidewalk outside the Wynn Las Vegas resort.

Sleeping bags and folding chairs were already in place Monday in Pasadena, California, at prime viewing spots for the 119th Rose Parade and its New Year's Day floats and marching bands.

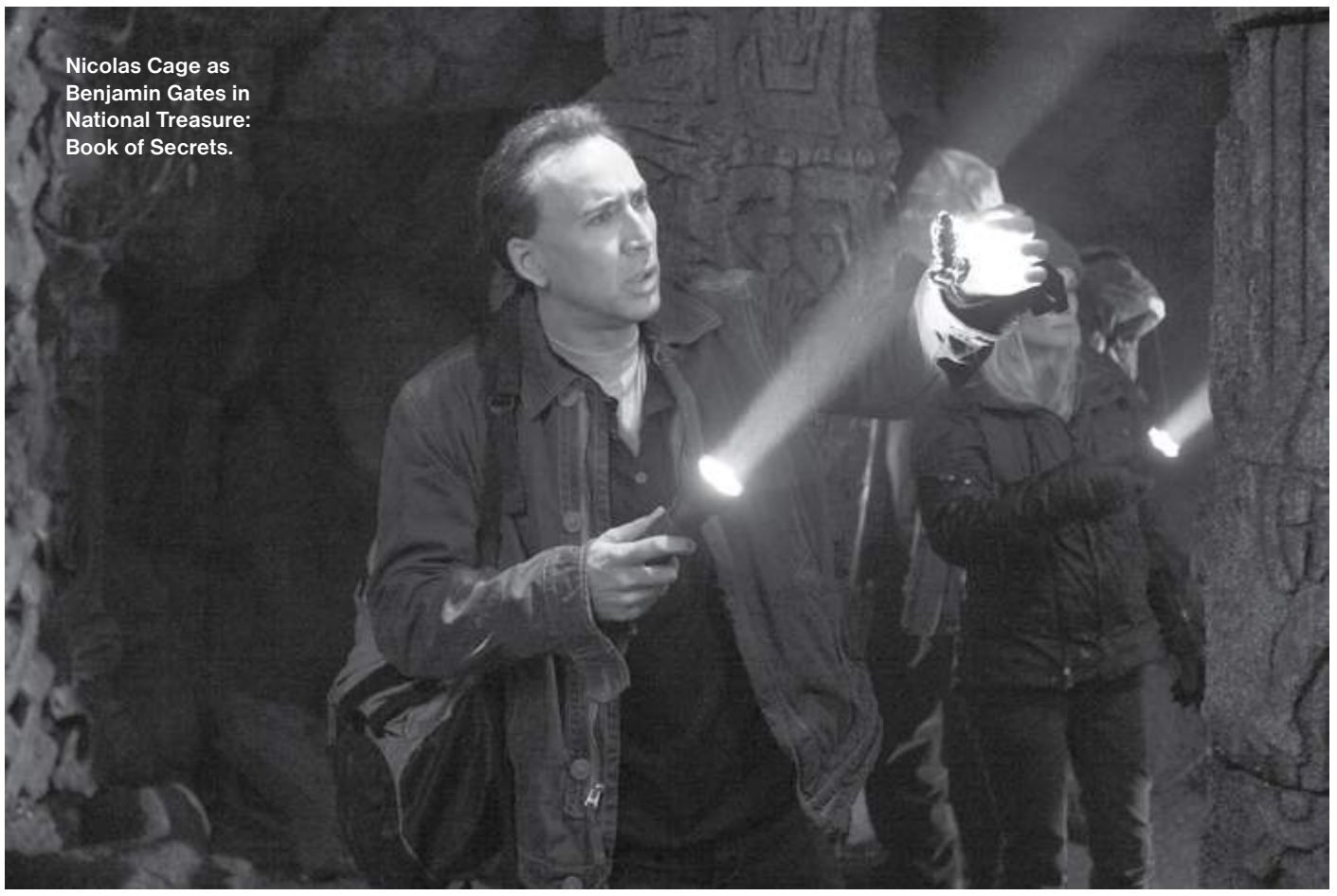
"This is my first time at the parade," said Mimi Moore, 18, who had been waiting on a patch of grass near the starting point of the parade since 2 a.m. "I'm only on three hours' sleep. We spend the time playing Twister and football."

About 20 same-sex couples decided to be the first to take advantage of New Hampshire's new civil-unions law with a midnight ceremony on the Statehouse steps in Concord. Snow and freezing temperatures were forecast.

"I don't have any winter coats with rhinestones and glitter, so I'm just going to dress warmly," said organizer and participant Jennifer Major of Gilmanton, New Hampshire.

AP

New York Yankees Alex Rodriguez and his wife Cynthia pose for photos during New Year's Eve celebrations in Times Square in New York on Monday, Dec. 31, 2008.



Nicolas Cage as Benjamin Gates in National Treasure: Book of Secrets.

'Treasure' finds more box office fortune

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Fortune-seeker Nicolas Cage, lonely guy Will Smith and a pack of talking chipmunks ended Hollywood's year on a happy note. Cage's "National Treasure: Book of Secrets" was the No. 1 movie for a second weekend with $35.6 million, followed by "Alvin and the Chipmunks" with $30 million and Smith's "I Am Legend" with $27.5 million, according to studio estimates Sunday. Those hits along with a solid crop of other holdovers and new movies that opened Christmas Day capped a year-end hot streak for Hollywood, whose business soared the last few weeks after a sluggish fall.

"It's being spread among three or four key movies, then another six or seven or eight below that, which is great," said Mark Zoradi, president of the motion-picture group at Disney, which released "National Treasure."

The top 12 movies took in $169.2 million, up 18 percent from the final weekend of 2006, when "Night at the Museum" led the box office with $36.8 million.

Hollywood will finish the year with record revenues of about $9.7 billion, up from the previous best of $9.45 billion in 2004, according to box-office tracker Media By Numbers.

Since prices are higher, the revenue represents actual admissions that were up only a fraction over 2006's and fell well short of modern Hollywood's record of 1.6 billion tickets sold in 2002.

With the holidays falling on Tuesday, many people have been taking five-day weekends, a boost for the movie business. Many students are off from school until next week, too.

"It's turned into like a two-week-long weekend for the movie industry," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of Media By Numbers.

"National Treasure," a sequel with Cage chasing historical clues to find a legendary city of gold, raised its domestic total to $124 million.

"Alvin and the Chipmunks," from 20th Century Fox, lifted its haul to $142.4 million. The Warner Bros. hit "I Am Legend," with Smith as a plague survivor who may be the last man alive, has climbed to $194.6 million.

Opening with huge numbers in limited release was Paramount Vantage's "There Will Be Blood," starring Daniel Day-Lewis in a tale of greed and violence during California's oil boom in the early 20th century. Playing at just two theaters in New York City and Los Angeles, "There Will Be Blood" took in $185,525 over the weekend and $309,703 since opening Wednesday. It expands to the top 10 markets Friday.

"There Will Be Blood" joins other films of violence and misdeeds such as "No Country for Old Men," "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street" and "Michael Clayton" aiming for top honors at the Academy Awards. All scored well in this month's Golden Globe nominations.

Oscar campaigner Harvey Weinstein, who delivered such best-picture winners as "Shakespeare in Love" and "Chicago" while at Miramax, said he hoped his feel-good drama "The Great Debaters" would stand out for awards consideration among all the blood-soaked fare. The Weinstein Co. release, distributed by MGM, took in $6.3 million over the weekend and $13.5 million since opening on Christmas.

A Golden Globe nominee for best drama, "The Great Debaters" features director and star Denzel Washington alongside Forest Whitaker in a story of a black debate team in the 1930s South.

"We're late, but we're hoping we can get that last best-picture spot" for the Oscars, Weinstein said. "The other movies are pretty bloody, but this is an uplifting American story."

Oscar nominations come out Jan. 22.

Other films that debuted on Christmas had solid weekends. "Alien vs. Predator: Requiem," a sci-fi horror sequel from 20th Century Fox, took in $10.05 million, raising its total since opening day to $26.9 million. Sony's Loch Ness monster fantasy "The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep" grossed $9.2 million and lifted its sum to $16.8 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Media By Numbers LLC. Final figures will be released Wednesday.

1. "National Treasure: Book of Secrets," $35.6 million.
2. "Alvin and the Chipmunks," $30 million.
3. "I Am Legend," $27.5 million.
4. "Charlie Wilson's War," $11.8 million.
5. "Juno," $10.3 million.
6. "Alien Vs. Predator: Requiem," $10.05 million.
7. "The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep," $9.2 million.
8. "P.S. I Love You," $9.1 million.
9. "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street," $8 million.
10. "Enchanted," $6.5 million.

Robert Frost's home vandalized in Vermont

RIPTON, Vt. (AP)—A former home of poet Robert Frost has been vandalized, with intruders destroying dozens of items and setting fire to furniture in what police say was an underage-drinking party. Homer Noble Farm was ransacked late Friday night during a party attended by as many as 50 people, Sgt. Lee Hodsden said Monday.

AP

Poet Robert Frost, of Ripton, Vermont, poses at a dinner at the Theodore Roosevelt Association in New York, in this Oct. 27, 1954, file photo.

The intruders broke a window to get into the two-story wood frame building - a furnished residence open in the summer - before destroying tables and chairs, pictures, windows, light fixtures, and dishes. Wicker furniture and dressers were smashed and thrown into a fireplace and burned, apparently to provide heat in the unheated building, he said.

Empty beer bottles and cans, plastic cups, and cellophane apparently used to hold marijuana were also found, according to Hodsden. The vandals vomited in the living room and discharged two fire extinguishers inside the building, on a dead-end road off Route 125.

A cabin on the property where Frost is said to have done some of his writing was untouched.

No arrests have been made, Hodsden said, adding that they've tracked down some partygoers and believe they are minors.

The damage was discovered Saturday by a hiker who notified police at Middlebury College, which maintains the site. The property's caretaker was last there at 10 a.m. Friday, police said.

Frost, a celebrated New England poet known for such verse as "The Road Not Taken" and "The Gift Outright," died in 1963. He summered at the home from 1939 to 1963.

Rick James' estate settles rights suit

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The estate of Rick James has settled a lawsuit claiming that a music publishing company collected money from licensing his songs without permission. The estate's attorney, Jennifer J. McGrath, announced the settlement in court Thursday. A trial was to begin Jan. 7.

Dozens of James' compositions, though not the late funk singer's biggest hit, "Super Freak," were involved in the suit, filed in March in Superior Court.

It accused California-based Brooklyn Music Publishing Group Inc. of collecting money from European music publishers and making new foreign deals without authority.

Messages left Monday for McGrath and Brooklyn Music attorney Vincent Chieffo were not returned.

The damages sought were not specified, and the terms of the settlement were not disclosed in court documents.

Grammy winner James was 56 when he died in 2004 of heart failure.

eBay sale of 'Knight Rider' car halted

GREENWICH, Conn. (AP)—An attorney said Friday he's halted an eBay auction of an original KITT—the talking car that helped David Hasselhoff escape bad guys on the '80s TV series "Knight Rider"—because he's had more inquiries than he can handle.

The black 1984 Pontiac Trans Am is being sold to satisfy the debts of a slain real estate developer, whose killing last year is unsolved. Boats, cars and other items owned by car aficionado Andrew Kissel already have been sold after creditors claimed he owed $30 million.

Patrick R. Gil, the attorney for Kissel's estate, said Dec. 21 that press reports prompted so much interest in the car that he had more bids than he could handle from Hawaii, where he was on vacation at the time. Gil, who had never used eBay before, said he plans to list the car again when he returns in January.

"This is the last item of Kissel's that I have to sell, so I have a special interest in it," he said.

The highest bid when Gil ended the auction was $40,100.

Kissel apparently bought his KITT from an auction house for $69,000 in 2005, but never picked it up. It's still in storage in California. Gil says pictures are available to verify its authenticity.

Kissel was found dead in his Greenwich mansion in April 2006 just days before he was to plead guilty in a multimillion-dollar real estate fraud case. His brother, Robert Kissel, died three years ago in Hong Kong when his wife fed him a strawberry milkshake laced with poison and bludgeoned him to death with a statue.

Feds share coupons to help TV transition

WASHINGTON (AP)—Millions of $40 government coupons become available Tuesday to help low-tech television owners buy special converter boxes for older TVs that might not work after the switch to digital broadcasting.

Beginning Feb. 18, 2009, anyone who does not own a digital set and still gets their programming via over-the-air antennas will no longer receive a picture.

That's the day the television industry completes its transition from old-style analog broadcasting to digital.

The converter boxes are expected to cost between $50 and $70 and will be available at most major electronics retail stores. Starting Tuesday, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration will begin accepting requests for two $40 coupons per household to be used toward the purchase of the boxes.

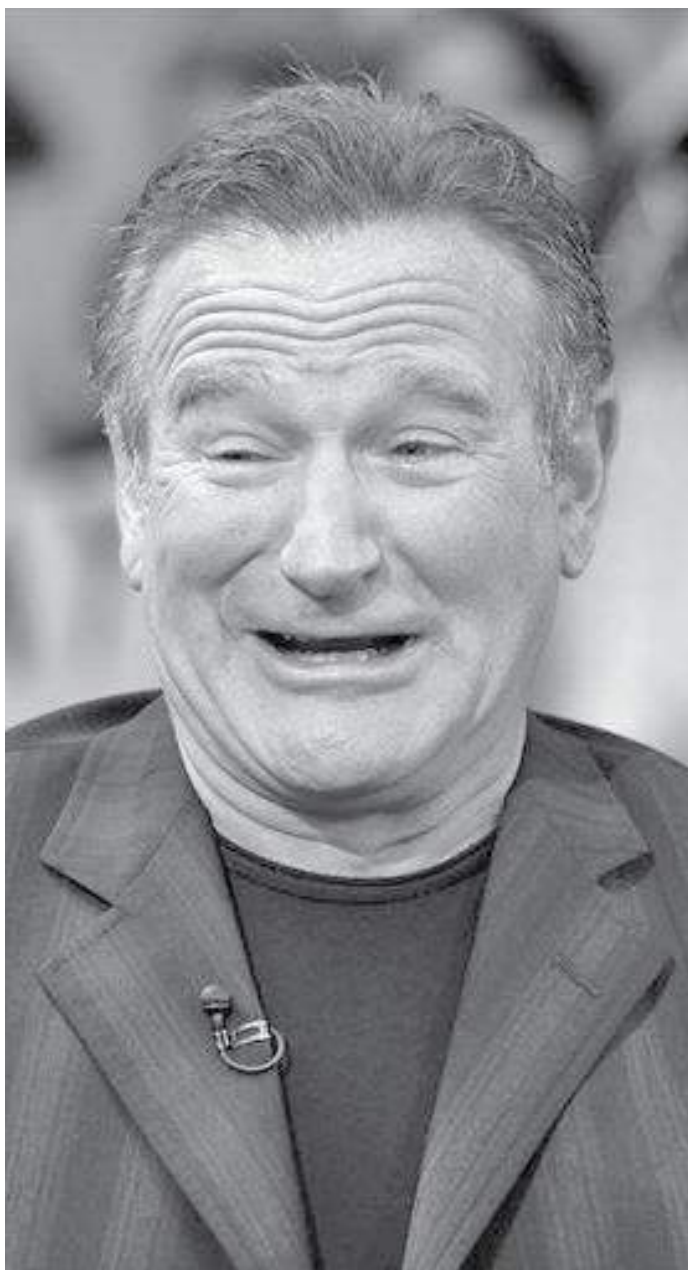
Viewers who have satellite or cable service will not need a box.

To request a coupon, consumers can apply online at http://www.dtv2009.gov starting Tuesday. The government also has set up a 24-hour hotline to take requests, 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009).

Congress, in ordering the transition to digital broadcasting, set aside $1.5 billion for the coupon program, which will fund 33.5 million coupons and other costs.

The giveaway basically works under the honor system.

Robin Williams to open Letterman's show



AP

Actor and comedian Robin Williams is shown in New York in this June file photo.

NEW YORK (AP)—Robin Williams will be David Letterman's first guest upon the return of his "Late Show" on CBS Wednesday. The appearance of a Hollywood A-lister who can talk a mile a minute may be Letterman's way of quickly trying to draw a distinction between his show and his late-night rivals, who are without writers and may also have trouble booking major entertainers as guests.

NBC's "Tonight" show said Monday that Republican presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee will appear on Jay Leno's first show back Wednesday.

Letterman announced Friday that his production company, Worldwide Pants, had reached an agreement to have his show return with writers despite the continuing writers strike, which began Nov. 5. The deal also allows writers to return to Craig Ferguson's late-night show, also owned by Worldwide Pants.

The late-night shows hosted by Jimmy Kimmel and Conan O'Brien are also returning Wednesday but have said little about who will be appearing.

Ronan a young actress to watch

AP

In a file photo actress Saoirse Ronan poses on the press line at the Los Angeles premiere of the feature film "Atonement" in Beverly Hills, Calif. on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2007.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Her role in "Atonement" earned Saoirse Ronan a Golden Globe nomination, but she hasn't read the Ian McEwan novel the movie is based on. Ronan is only 13, and the book deals with sexual themes.

"Atonement" is Ronan's third film, but the Irish actress (whose first name is pronounced "SUR'-shuh") is already getting attention for her role as the young Briony Tallis.

In 2008, she'll appear with Bill Murray in the action-fantasy "City of Ember" and star as a con artist in "Death Defying Acts" alongside Catherine Zeta-Jones. She also has the lead role in Peter Jackson's film version of "The Lovely Bones" - another book she hasn't read because of the mature content.

Based on the Alice Sebold best-seller, "The Lovely Bones" is the story of 14-year-old Susie Salmon, who's raped and killed. She narrates her story from heaven as she looks down on her family as they try to cope with the tragedy.

Ronan auditioned for the part on videotape with her father Paul Ronan, a well-known Irish stage actor. The teenager says she's still "trying to get my head around" the fact that she's in a film by Peter Jackson, who directed "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

Mindy McCready released from jail

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (AP)—Mindy McCready, who was sentenced in September for violating probation from a 2004 drug arrest, has been released from jail. The 32-year-old country singer was released Sunday morning, said a clerk at the Williamson County jail.

McCready

The violation occurred in July when McCready was accused of scuffling with her mother and resisting arrest at her mother's home in Fort Myers, Fla.

She still must serve two years' probation.

Her attorney, Lee Ofman, said McCready has learned her lesson and will stay out of trouble.

She had a No. 1 single in 1996 with "Guys Do It All the Time."

Attorney wants Britney Spears deposition soon

NEW YORK (AP)—The attorney for Kevin Federline says he wants to depose Britney Spears soon, the latest step in the former couple's ongoing child-custody battle.

"Britney Spears will have her deposition early (next) year," Mark Vincent Kaplan told People.com late Saturday outside a Beverly Hills restaurant. "We've got a lot to talk about."

Spears, 26, called in sick to a court-ordered deposition Dec. 12, although she was photographed that day driving with a friend.

"She was, in fact, out later that day and night," Kaplan said. "It's not fourth grade where you get a doctor's note and it's all OK."

Spears and Federline have been wrangling for months over custody of their sons, 2-year-old Sean Preston and 1-year-old Jayden James.

Federline, 29, has temporary custody of the children because Spears, who has limited visitation rights, has defied court orders. Spears and Federline were married in October 2004 and finalized their divorce in July.

Blues artist 'Weepin' Willie dies at 81

BOSTON (AP)—"Weepin'" Willie Robinson, a blues singer who performed with Steven Tyler and Bonnie Raitt but also spent time homeless, has died at age 81.

Robinson had been a sharecropper, an Army veteran and a friend of performers, including B.B. King.

"He was truly the elder statesman of the (Boston) blues. He was our godfather. He was the most dear man," Holly Harris, host of "Blues on Sunday" on WBOS radio, told The Boston Globe for Monday's editions.

When he sang, "you knew he meant it because he had passion," Harris said.

Robinson died Sunday in a fire started by a cigarette he was smoking in bed, the Boston Fire Department said.

He had worked a benefit concert with Tyler and two Boston Music Awards shows, in 2005 and again earlier this month.

Robinson was born in Atlanta and picked cotton and fruit with his family up and down the East Coast. After spending time in the Army in the 1940s, he became a master of ceremonies and doorman at blues clubs in Trenton, N.J., where he met King and other legends and eventually sang with King's 21-piece orchestra.

His daughter, Lorraine Robinson, told the Globe her father found his place on stage.

"A great smile would come on his face and he would be in his own little world, like he'd tune everything out," she said. "He just, like, felt the music. It was so much in his soul."

Robinson settled in Boston in 1959 and played in clubs, but by 2005 he was living on the street and out of touch with his family. Blues performers learned of his situation, held a benefit concert and made sure he was fed and clothed.

Robinson later performed everywhere from local clubs to the hallways of the rest home where he lived.

His wife, Alice, died four decades ago.

Woman's good fortune is reason to pay it forward

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I am one of your faithful readers and have personally related to some of the problems that appear in your column. I have been particularly moved by letters in which people share their personal experiences regarding acts of kindness.

As a foster child, I was lucky to have been placed in a secure and loving home. I try each and every day to pass on the love that I have received (from both my biological family and my extended one) to the people I meet. It can be a gesture as simple as helping to carry someone's groceries to the car, or offering a ride to a mother with small children whose car has broken down or a parent pushing a stroller in the rain.

I hope I will be able to teach this trait to my children. I would like them to help others because it is the right thing to do, not because there is a benefit to be reaped.

So please, fellow readers, pay it forward. Help others not only because it feels good, but also teaches our kids that being a good person is its own reward.

ANDI IN ATLANTA

DEAR ANDI: Thank you for an "upper" of a letter. I am certain that you will pass along to your children the lesson of selfless giving because children learn by example. And lucky they are to have a parent like you.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: When is it OK to correct the mispronunciation of a word? I need to, but I'm not sure how to go about it.

My husband, "Rob," is an intelligent and educated man, but he has no idea how to pronounce some words that he uses on a daily basis. Most of these words pertain to Rob's hobby, which is salt-water aquariums, and I'm afraid his credibility is taking a beating because of it. He talks about his tank a lot. Rob knows what he's talking about, but he doesn't know how to say it. Should I say something to him?

TREADING WATER IN HAWAII

DEAR TREADING: It is no more "snobbish" to say to one's mate, "Honey, I love you, but you're mispronouncing that word," than to tell him that his zipper is open. It shows that you care. When you mention it, do it in private, and be sure to have a dictionary close by. After that, what he chooses to do about it is his choice.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I was married in November, and one of my co-workers, "Brooke," attended the ceremony. Her gift to me was a vase. When we opened the box, my husband and I discovered that the vase was engraved with Brooke's and her husband's names and their wedding date. Tucked inside the vase was a card from the couple who had given it to them for their wedding.

How should I handle this? Should I return the vase to her, or ignore it and give it to Goodwill?

JENNIFER IN PORT ORCHARD, WASH.

DEAR JENNIFER: Neither. Remove the card, re-wrap the gift, and give it to Brooke on her next anniversary.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

THIS WILL BE THE STRONGEST SNOW FORT EVER MADE!
KEEP PACKING ON SNOW. THIS WILL BE INDESTRUCTIBLE.
WE'LL POUR WATER ON IT, SO IT FREEZES OVERNIGHT. THAT WAY OUR FORT WILL BE HERE UNTIL JULY!
WHERE'S THAT KID?!
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1/2

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

THAT'LL BE THE PIZZA
I'LL GET IT
DING DONG
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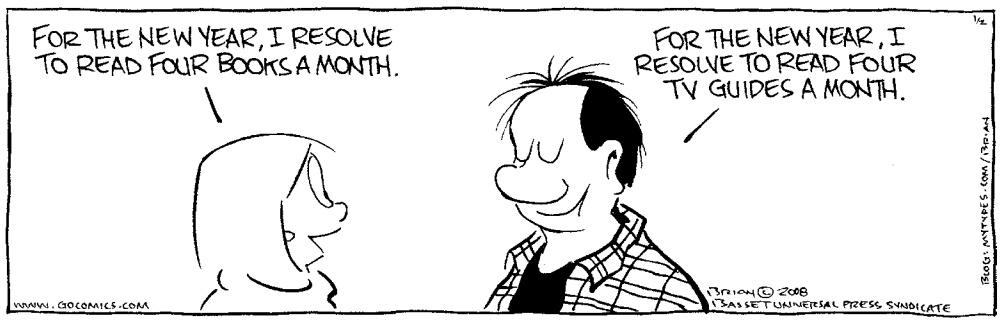
JIM DAVIS 1-2
WAIT! I HAVEN'T PAID YOU!
MAIL IT!
PIZZA
I'M ASSUMING THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU
SOME PEOPLE JUST CAN'T HANDLE CUSTOMER APPRECIATION
PIZZA

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


FOR THE NEW YEAR, I RESOLVE TO READ FOUR BOOKS A MONTH.
FOR THE NEW YEAR, I RESOLVE TO READ FOUR TV GUIDES A MONTH.
www.gocomics.com
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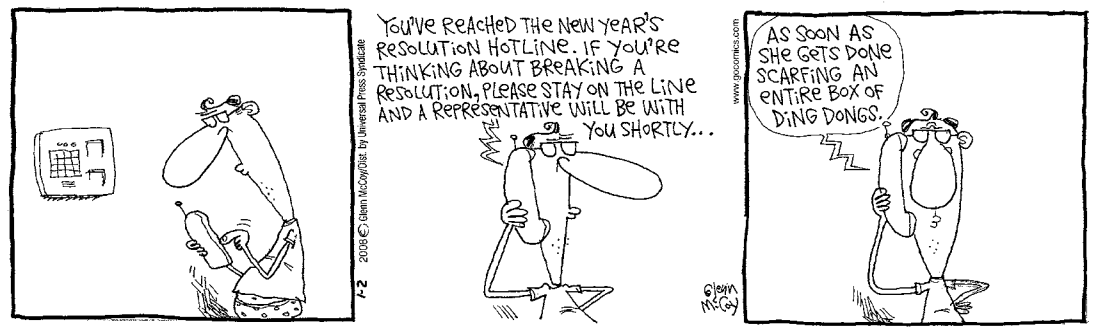
The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


You've reached the New Year's Resolution Hotline. If you're thinking about breaking a resolution, please stay on the line and a representative will be with you shortly...
1-2 2008 © Glenn McCoy/Dist. by Universal Press Syndicate
As soon as she gets done scarfing an entire box of Ding Dongs.
www.gocomics.com

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Auction offers
5 Shriver of tennis
8 Location
12 Tend texts
13 Id counterpart
14 Motley —, rock band
15 Pendant gem
17 Got up
18 Beauty parlor
19 Wall Street buys
21 Infant
24 Actress Thurman
25 Go slack-jawed
28 Fill the hold
30 Definite article
33 Eggs
34 Pet shop array
35 One (Ger.)
36 "— the ramparts ..."
37 Throat-clearing sound
38 Does arithmetic
39 50 Cent piece?
41 Santa's runway
43 Type of scholar
46 Beast of burden
50 Speck
51 Food-chain participant
54 Skelton's Kadiddlehopper
55 Melody
56 Tony Shalhoub series
57 Sneakers brand
58 Fish eggs
59 Heroic poetry

DOWN

1 Wagers
2 Notion
3 Use a rotary phone
4 Flashtube
5 Part of RPM
6 Past
7 Clears the decks?
8 "Begone!"
9 Distributed equitably
10 English river
11 Unisex shirts
16 "CSI" evidence
20 Colors
22 Mediocre
23 Avid
25 Moo — gai pan
26 Rd.
27 Imitated
29 Showroom sample
31 Stashed
32 Navy rank (abbr.)
34 Superhero raiment
38 Blazing
40 First father-son Presidential surname
42 Antiquated
43 "Casablanca" role
44 Gap
45 Mast
47 On
48 Stereo counterpart
49 Clumsy fleet
52 Carnival city
53 Before

Solution time: 21 mins.

A	D	A	M	■	C	A	T	■	F	L	I	T
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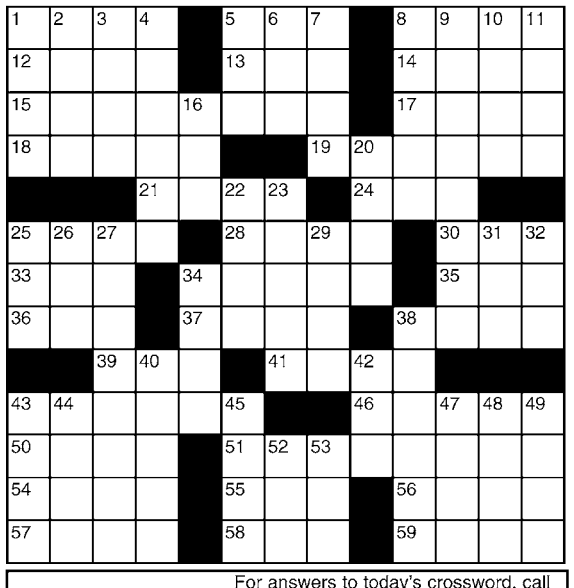
I	N	S	O	M	N	I	A	■	U	S	E	R
■	■	■	P	A	T	■	V	A	G	A	R	Y
A	S	T	I	R	■	S	E	G	A	■	■	■
S	P	E	C	■	I	N	S	U	L	A	T	E
T	A	N	■	A	N	I	T	A	■	F	E	D
I	N	S	A	N	I	T	Y	■	D	R	A	G
■	■	■	F	A	Q	S	■	P	R	O	S	E
I	N	S	I	T	U	■	A	H	A	■	■	■
D	O	P	E	■	I	N	S	I	G	N	I	A
E	V	I	L	■	T	E	E	■	O	A	R	S
S	A	N	D	■	Y	E	A	■	N	E	A	P

Yesterday's answer 1-2



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Taye Diggs, 36; Christy Turlington, 39; Cuba Gooding Jr., 40; Tia Carrere, 41

Happy Birthday: Add a little heart and soul into the mix and you'll be the one everyone looks to for answers. Your dedication, loyalty and desire to do what's right will take you beyond your expectations. Don't lose sight of your goals. Giving in just won't cut it this year, so stay true to yourself. Your numbers are 11, 15, 22, 23, 25, 40

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Don't look too far beyond the moment today. You can rely on someone who loves you to pick up the slack and give you a bit of time to do nothing. It will do you good to sit idle. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Set your sights high and make a concerted effort to learn whatever you can in order to proceed successfully this year. Whatever information you can find regarding someone you are interested in or a project you want to pursue, the better. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You may be uncertain about how you see things going in your personal life but, once you address these matters, everything else will fall into place. Aggressive action will bring results. You will realize the lessons learned are worth the initial grief. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Don't give in and you will gain confidence and respect from others. Change is upon you and, like it or not, it will be beneficial in the end. Let go of the past. ✪✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): You are the center of attention and, although some of the people you are close to may not appreciate your popularity, you need to mingle and be stroked for your gallant and entertaining personality. The events you attend will lead to interesting proposals. ✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Get started on one of your resolutions or projects. Lay the groundwork and get feedback from the people you respect. In a short time, you will see impressive results. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Listen to what's being said but don't take it as gospel. You will have to decipher what's fact and what isn't. Problems at home will make you want to spend time with acquaintances, not family. A sudden trip will turn into an interesting adventure. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): It's a new year and a time to put all your thoughts into play. Money can be made, raised or invested with confidence today. Interest will be shown if you discuss your plans with people who have vision. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Getting involved in an organization that helps the impoverished or deals with environmental issues will bring you in touch with some very useful people. Uncertainty about your current location may leave you feeling unsettled. Don't make a move too quickly. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): It's time to launch whatever you've been working on. Put your heart and soul into what you are doing and you will get results far beyond your expectations. Money, deals and contracts are moving in your direction. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Don't let your emotions lead you into a sticky conversation. Keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself. Focus on the creative or trying something out of the ordinary. Time spend on self-improvement will enable you to move forward with confidence. ✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Your involvement with some of the people you meet at an event will turn into more than a brief encounter. Opportunities are apparent if you can actually deliver what you offer. State facts and be informative and you will seal the deal. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are passionate, engaging, hardworking and intense. You are playful and aggressive and welcome any challenge or adventure.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				2				
			8		6			
		3				5		
		2		9		8		
	8	5				2	6	
9	6	1		4		7	3	5
		8				1		
	2	7	1		3	9	5	
1	3			7			2	8

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/02

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

1	8	2	4	3	9	6	7	5
9	7	4	5	2	6	1	8	3
5	6	3	8	1	7	9	2	4
6	3	8	2	4	1	5	9	7
4	1	7	9	5	3	2	6	8
2	5	9	6	7	8	3	4	1
8	4	5	1	6	2	7	3	9
3	2	1	7	9	4	8	5	6
7	9	6	3	8	5	4	1	2

Difficulty Level ★★ 1/01

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN GHOSTS? **Solution: 8 letters**

S	Y	N	N	A	C	N	U	M	Y	S	T	E	R	Y
I	H	P	R	E	S	E	N	C	E	W	T	A	L	K
S	D	O	P	O	L	T	E	R	G	E	I	S	T	R
O	E	S	T	E	L	L	X	E	H	N	R	N	E	A
H	L	C	N	E	M	U	P	A	Y	A	I	E	L	D
C	A	E	N	O	S	C	L	L	N	M	P	T	E	U
Y	E	P	V	E	I	T	A	G	O	N	S	S	V	S
S	V	I	P	M	I	S	I	T	H	T	I	I	I	I
P	E	I	A	E	T	R	N	M	P	O	H	L	S	G
E	R	G	S	O	A	A	E	A	O	O	U	P	I	H
S	E	O	R	I	H	R	D	P	M	N	E	L	O	T
N	D	I	V	P	O	O	A	Ⓔ	X	C	Y	U	N	I
E	E	L	N	I	U	N	Ⓛ	N	T	E	S	I	R	N
S	K	O	O	B	N	Ⓐ	S	E	C	E	A	S	E	G
G	M	Y	T	H	Ⓣ	G	R	D	R	E	A	M	S	S

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Appearance, Books, Cease, Cult, Dark, Doubt, Dreams, Experiences, Ghoul, Hold, Home, House, Image, Listen, Mansions, Movie, Mystery, Myth, News, Phantom, Phony, Poltergeist, Presence, Proving, Psychosis, Real, Revealed, Rise, Seen, Sense, Shot, Sightings, Specter, Spirit, Stories, Tale, Talk, Television, Tell, Testimony, Uncanny, Unexplained, Visions

Yesterday's Answer: Gorbachev

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 HOUSEWORKER (TH 4569)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Housing $100 monthly deduction. Food $100 monthly deduction. Medical expenses & worker's compensation coverage. Contact: Joseph M. and Vivian G. Takai. Tel. 235-3026.

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1 SECURITY GUARD (W 80526)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical insurance & workers compensation. Contact: Juan Q. Inos dba J'S Security Guard @235-0254.

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1 BARTENDER (W 80527)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; free medical insurance & workers compensation. Contact: Wood Village Saipan, Inc. @235-0354.

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1 COOK HELPER (W 80528)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Worker compensation insurance & medical reimbursable. Contact: Park Corporation dba Dae Jang Kum Restaurant @234-9595.

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1 COOK (W 80529)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee self housing; employee self food; free medical & workers compensation. Contact: Tai Hu International Inc. dba Bakery, Mini Mart & Restaurant @233-2288.

1 SUPERVISOR (W 80530)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee self housing; employee self food; free medical & workers compensation. Contact: Tai Hu International Inc. dba Bakery, Mini Mart & Restaurant @233-2288.

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1 BEAUTICIAN (W 80531)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self food; workmens compensation & medical. Contact: Keebentton Int'l Inc. dba Serenity Salon & SPA @233-6688.

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1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (W 80532)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: PCC Corporation @235-3048/233-5281.

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1 FARMER (W 80533)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/deductible housing; food provided & medical provided. Contact: Augustin K. Castro Jr. @287-3972.

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3 HEAVY EQPT. OPERATOR (W 80534)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; free medical & workers compensation. Contact: Placido L. Manalo dba "E.Z. Call Heavy Equipment Rental @235-1918.

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1 MANAGER, SALES (W 80535)
Salary:$650.00-$2,000.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Yerim Corporation dba Evertrust Tour Agency @483-4212.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (W 80536)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/ER charge housing; $100.00/ER charge food; ER provided medical & workers compensation. Contact: Edward W. or Susie F. Williams @288-4362.

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1 EDITOR (W 80537)
Salary:$10.80/hour. Benefits: Medical & workmen compensation provided. Contact: Hafadai Productions, Inc. @234-2067.

1 GRAPHIC DESIGNER (W 80538)
Salary:$5.75/hour. Benefits: Medical & workmen compensation provided. Contact: Hafadai Productions, Inc. @234-2067.

1 PRODUCTION MANAGER (W 80539)
Salary:$1,200.00/Bi-weekly. Benefits: Use of company car; medical & workmen compensation provided. Contact: Hafadai Productions, Inc. @234-2067.

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1 FOOD SERVER (80540)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Worksmen compensation & medical. Contact: Allied Construction Corp. dba Barnys Pizza @234-7492.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (W 80541)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing per month; $100.00/food per month & medical. Contact: Clarissa DB. Sablan @287-7352.

---

1 HOUSEWORKER (W 80542)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee provided housing; employee provided food; the employee is provided with workmen's compensation insurance & medical expenses are reimbursable. Contact: Hiron Mollah @234-3015/285-5547.

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1 FARMER (W 80543)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical expenses. Contact: Manju P. Hom @235-7789.

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1 GROUNDKEEPER (W 80544)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provided food; medical & workman compensation. Contact: Rainaldo C. Aguon dba 3A's Ground Maintenance @287-0077.

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1 ACCOUNTANT (W 80545)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Worksmen insurance & free medical provided. Contact: O&S Enterprises, Inc. dba Morning Glory @234-5959.

1 GRAPHIC ARTIST (W 80546)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation insurance & medical provided. Contact: O&S Enterprises, Inc. dba Morning Glory @234-5959.

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1 BEAUTICIAN (W 80547)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self arrange food; health & workmen's compensation provided by company. Contact: Genoveva's Hair Power Inc. dba Genoveva's Salon for Men & Women @234-6378.

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2 COOK (W 80548)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing deductible; $100.00/food deductible; health & workmen's insurance company provided. Contact: D'Elegance Ent., Inc. dba D'Elegance Café @234-9227.

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1 ACCOUNTANT (W 80549)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: J.T.M. Corporation @233-5436.

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2 MASON (W 80550)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical benefits & workers compensation. Contact: Hongye Trading Company @235-8748.

1 CARPENTER (W 80551)
Salary:$3.55/hour. . Benefits: Medical benefits & workers compensation. Contact: Hongye Trading Company @235-8748.

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2 TOUR GUIDE (W 80552)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Man Bao Corporation dba Win tour @235-9868.

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2 ELECTRICIAN (W 80553)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical are provided by the employer. Contact: Mac-US Int'l Inc. dba New City Int'l Const. @288-0191.

1 PLUMBER (W 80554)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical are provided by the employer. Contact: Mac-US Int'l Inc. dba New City Int'l Const. @288-0191.

1 MASON (W 80555)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical are provided by the employer. Contact: Mac-US Int'l Inc. dba New City Int'l Const. @288-0191.

4 CARPENTER (W 80556)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical are provided by the employer. Contact: Mac-US Int'l Inc. dba New City Int'l Const. @288-0191.

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2 AUTO BODY REPAIRER (W 80557)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee self arrange housing; self provided food; medical & workmens compensation provided by employer. Contact: MA. Rosario O. Yoshimoto dba RD Auto Shop @234-7422.

WHATZIT Solution:
Holy Orders

1 AUTOMOTIVE PAINTER (W 80558)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee self arrange housing; self provided food; employer to provide medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: MA. Rosario O. Yoshimoto dba RD Auto Shop @234-7422.

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1 MASSEUSE/MASSEUR (W 80559)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Dani Corporation dba Sabana II @233-2058.

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4 FASTFOOD RESTAURANT SUPERVISOR (W 80560)
Salary:$3.75-$6.25/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; transportation self arranged & workmens compensation. Contact: J.C.A. Inc. dba McDonald's @235-8761.

1 ACCOUNTANT (W 80561)
Salary:$5.00-$10.00/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; workmen's compensation provided & transportation self arranged. Contact: J.C.A. Inc. dba McDonald's @235-8761.

3 FASTFOOD WORKER (W 80562)
Salary:$3.55-$4.25/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; workmen's compensation provided & transportation self arrange. Contact: J.C.A. Inc. dba McDonald's @235-8761.

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2 ACCOUNTANT (W 80563)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self arrange food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: OCM (Saipan) Corporation dba Bluehaus/OCM Professionals @233-2862/285-9308.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (W 80564)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; $100.00/food deduct monthly; surety bond & medical. Contact: Gregory Borja @235-4833.

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CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
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• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

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As added service to our valued customers, you may now submit all your JVA placements for announcement/publication in *Saipan Tribune's* print and online edition and KZMI/KCNM at the same time. No more worries of having to go to two different locations every time you need to place job vacancy announcements. Special rates are available for JVA customers under this arrangement.

Print*	
• 1st position	$10
• 2nd position	$3
• Succeeding positions	$1

LOWER RATES! Effective Feb. 3, 2007

Combo (Print and Online)*	
• 1st position	$13
• 2nd position	$4
• Succeeding positions	$2

Radio (KCNM/KZMI)	
• Up to 6 positions	$5
• More than 6 positions	$10

*These rates apply to all vacancy announcements that include corresponding benefits and which announcements are all under the same company name.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Job Vacancy Announcements

Monday Through Friday Issues: All ads placed before 12 noon will come out the next publication date.

Saturday And Sunday Issues:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.
- KCNM/KZMI: All ads placed on Friday (9am to 5pm) will be for Monday's radio announcement.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

Job Vacancy Announcements

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

Ravens fire head coach after 5-11 season

OWINGS MILLS, Md. (AP)—Brian Billick never came close to duplicating the success he enjoyed early in his career as head coach of the Baltimore Ravens, and it finally cost him his job. Billick was fired Monday, less than 24 hours after his team concluded a season of high expectations with a disappointing 5-11 record. His entire staff, including defensive coordinator Rex Ryan, also was dismissed.

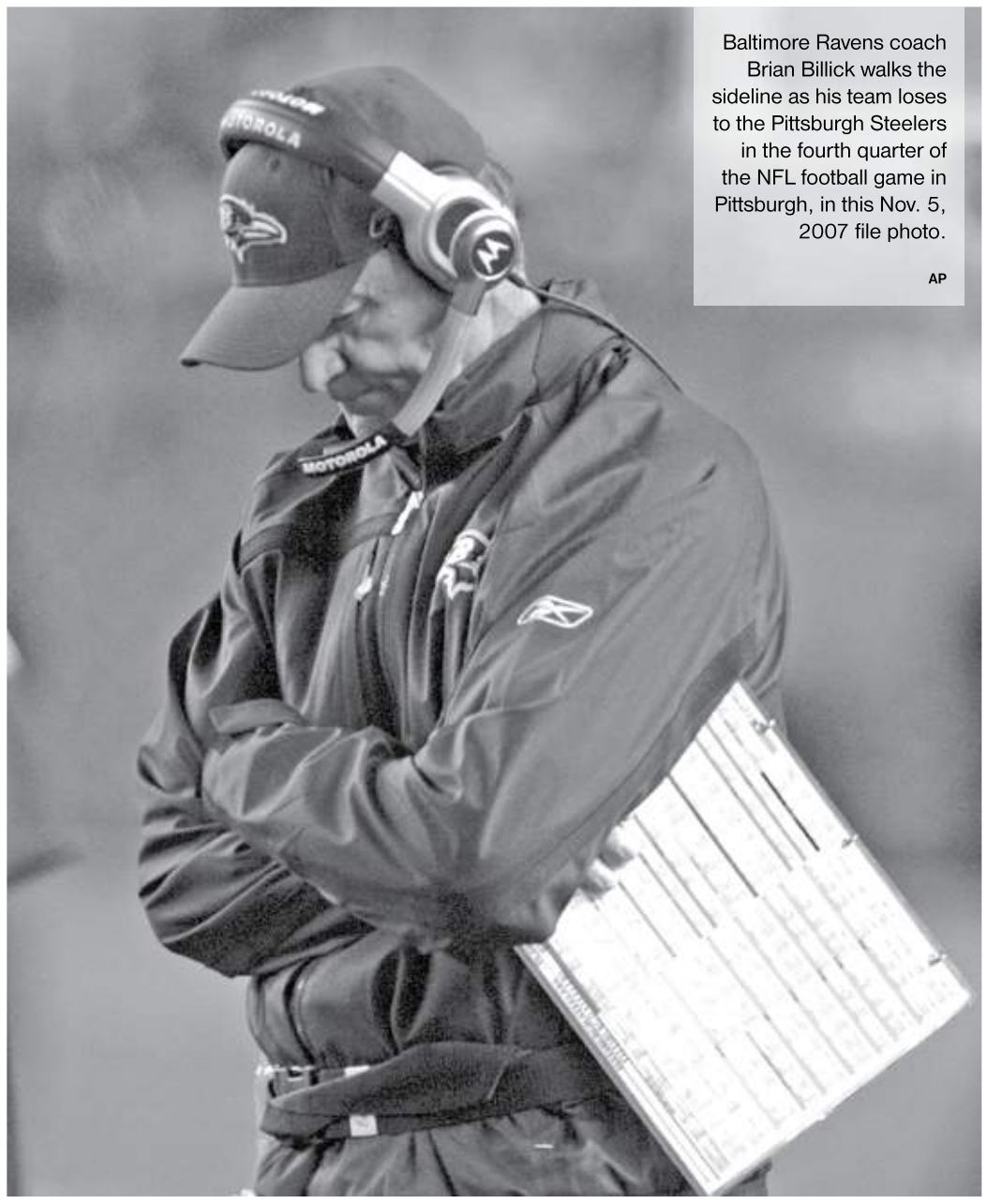
"I believed that it was time for a change, I believed that we have the nucleus of a team that can get back to the Super Bowl, and we felt that in the next five years we had a better chance with a new coach than leaving Brian in that position," said owner Steve Bisciotti, who made the decision after consulting with team president Dick Cass and general manager Ozzie Newsome.

Billick won the 2001 Super Bowl in his second season with the Ravens, but since Bisciotti took over full ownership in 2004, Baltimore was 33-33. That included two losing seasons and only one playoff appearance, a one-and-out performance in 2006.

"It's a gut feeling. I have one job here, and that's to have a leader that I think gives us the best chance," Bisciotti said. "We have been losing more than winning lately."

Billick led the Ravens to a franchise-best 13-3 record in 2006. But Baltimore lost a team-record nine consecutive games this season before ending the skid Sunday with a 27-21 win over Pittsburgh.

Bisciotti said he made the decision to fire Billick hours before kickoff, and carried out the move Monday morning in a meeting at the team's practice facility.



Baltimore Ravens coach Brian Billick walks the sideline as his team loses to the Pittsburgh Steelers in the fourth quarter of the NFL football game in Pittsburgh, in this Nov. 5, 2007 file photo.

AP

"He had to make a hard decision, and he did what he believes is best for the Ravens," Billick said in a statement. "We are friends and will remain friends."

Billick had three years left on a contract that pays $5 million per season. Bisciotti determined a few weeks ago that he would give Billick a chance to right things in 2008, but changed his mind after talking with Cass, Newsome and other NFL owners.

"We believe that we will be better with fresh blood or we wouldn't have made this decision," Bisciotti said. "We obviously wouldn't fire Brian if we thought we were where we needed to be."

Ryan will be considered for the head coaching job, but Newsome said he will "be calling and talking to a lot of people."

Billick's nine seasons with Baltimore was tied with Philadelphia's Andy Reid as the third-longest current run with the same team. He took the Ravens to the playoffs in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2006 and finished with an 80-64 record.

"Sometimes the message can get repetitive after a while," 12-year offensive tackle Jonathan Ogden said.

The Ravens expected to compete for a world championship this season after bringing back almost every starter from last year's AFC North champions. But injuries and a turnover-prone offense contributed to a complete collapse after a 4-2 start, and Baltimore finished with sole possession of last place in the division for the first time since 1997.

Bisciotti knows there are no guarantees that the Ravens' next coach will get better results than Billick. But he figured making a change was worth the risk.

"In order to be successful you have to take chances, and in order to take chances you have to listen to your heart. You have to go with your gut," the owner said. "It doesn't mean that you don't fear being wrong, because I do fear being wrong. I could be three coaches past Brian Billick nine years from now trying to solve this puzzle."

Billick was the offensive coordinator of the Minnesota Vikings before coming to Baltimore. He was deemed to be an offensive genius when he got to the Ravens, but the team became known for its staunch defense and never had an attack that was remotely as productive as that of the Vikings in the late 1990s.

"I'm not saying I agree with it," kicker Matt Stover said of Billick's dismissal, "but sometimes things have to change."

Billick, 53, was hired as Baltimore's second head coach in January 1999, succeeding Ted Marchibroda. In Billick's first season, the Ravens reached .500 (8-8) for the first time. Then he led Baltimore to a 12-4 record and a berth in the Super Bowl, where the Ravens beat the New York Giants 34-7.

But after he failed to build on last year's 13-3 record, Billick wasn't afforded the opportunity to bounce back from a season in which the Ravens went from Oct. 14 to the end of December without a win.

"For all we went through as a team, I think coach Billick stood in there. And for all the verbal lashings from the fans and the media, he stood in there and took it," wide receiver Derrick Mason said. "That says a lot for the man, for his character. Yes, it was shocking, but the organization had to make a decision, and they felt in was the best decision for this team to move forward."

But was it the right decision? Bisciotti couldn't say for sure.

"How much blame you put on different people, and how much you hold yourself responsible is new to me," he said. "I hope that over time that Baltimore views me as (good) an owner as Brian Billick was a head football coach.

"I've got some catching up to do to the man that I asked to step down today. The jury's out on me. Brian's already got his Super Bowl."

Buffalo Bills GM Marv Levy steps down

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)—Turns out, Marv Levy's job was to restore order in Buffalo. It'll be on someone else to turn the Bills into a playoff contender. On Monday, 10 years to the day after he retired as the Bills coach, Levy called it quits again, stepping down after two years as the team's general manager.

As encores go, his second stint in Buffalo didn't come anywhere near to matching the first, when Levy established his Hall of Fame credentials by coaching the Bills to an unprecedented four consecutive AFC titles in the early 1990s.

Despite consecutive 7-9 finishes and an eight-season playoff drought, the 82-year-old Levy leaves confident in the franchise's future.

"It has been an experience that I have enjoyed immensely," Levy said in a statement released by the Bills. "Dick Jauron, his coaching staff and an admirable core of high-character players are heading in the right direction."

Bills owner Ralph Wilson credited Levy for bringing stability to a franchise that had alienated its fans and been undone by questionable coaching and personnel decisions under former team president Tom Donahoe, who was fired after the 2005 season.

"I will always be grateful for his service," Wilson said. "When we needed a new focus and direction, Marv improved our organization's morale, attitude and environment: All of that, plus the stability we needed to move forward."

Levy, who rejected an offer to stay on after his two-year contract expired, can be credited for rebuilding through the draft, as opposed to free agency. The Bills are stocked with a young core of players who have talent but have yet to jell.

Levy also earned marks for hiring Jauron, who kept players focused as the team endured a rash of injuries, finishing with 17 on injured reserve. That group included tight end Kevin Everett, now walking after sustaining a severe spinal cord injury in Buffalo's season opener.

But there's still a long way to go for the team, whose eight-year playoff drought is the second-longest active streak in the NFL, tied with Detroit and one year shorter than Arizona's.

The Bills' 53 wins this decade are tied with San Francisco for fifth fewest in the league—not including Houston, which rejoined the NFL in 2002.

Buffalo also was undone this season by a revolving door at quarterback. Edwards eventually beat out incumbent J.P. Losman, which contributed to an inept offense that will go down as one of the team's worst ever.

Parcells fires Dolphins GM Randy Mueller

DAVIE, Fla. (AP)—Shoes and other equipment filled 4-foot-high bins in the Miami Dolphins' locker room Monday, signaling the start of the offseason. Another sign: upheaval in the offices upstairs. The Dolphins' latest shake-up began before noon when new boss Bill Parcells fired general manager Randy Mueller and two other members of the player personnel staff. Jeff Ireland, vice president of college and pro scouting for the Dallas Cowboys, was the front-runner to replace Mueller and confirmed he was flying Tuesday to South Florida for an interview.

Still undetermined was the future of coach Cam Cameron, who went 1-15 in his first year as an NFL head coach. He awaited a fateful meeting with Parcells.

"There's going to be an opportunity in the next few days to sit down and talk with Bill," Cameron said. "We'll treat it as an exchange between two guys who want to see the Miami Dolphins be successful, and what it's going to take to do that."

Sweeping changes are anticipated from Parcells, a two-time Super Bowl champion coach who began work last week as executive vice president of football operations. He started by firing Mueller, assistant director of player personnel Mike Baugh and college scouting coordinator Rick Thompson.

The departures came less than a year after owner Wayne Huizenga gave Mueller and Cameron responsibility for rebuilding the Dolphins.

"Any time you have a relationship with somebody you care about, it's tough," Cameron said. "But we all know this is a tough business, and we've been through a tough year."

Only an overtime win against Baltimore two weeks ago prevented the Dolphins from becoming the NFL's first 0-16 team. Instead they're the eighth team to finish 1-15.

A rich franchise legacy that includes Don Shula, Dan Marino and the perfect season was forever tarnished by a season that made the Dolphins a national laughingstock. They lost to two quarterbacks who had been busts in Miami, Daunte Culpepper and A.J. Feeley. They lost twice to the woeful New York Jets. They also lost twice to New England, and even once in England.

The season was the sorry culmination of a long, slow decline. Three coaching changes since 2004 have failed to reverse the slide, and the Dolphins will sit out the playoffs for the sixth consecutive year, extending a franchise record.

"Are there certain things you would like to see changed? Absolutely," said defensive end Jason Taylor, Miami's lone Pro Bowl player. "I think any player in that locker room would say the same thing. There are certain things that do need to change that aren't set up for us to succeed. It's not an indictment or a knock against anybody, but it is what it is."

As a post-mortem, Cameron held a team meeting Monday that ended with a five-minute speech to the players by Parcells.

"I think he just wanted to introduce himself and give them a feel for some things to think about going into the offseason," Cameron said.

"My first impression of him is he's a guy who means business," cornerback Will Allen said. "You've got to respect him. If anybody can get this thing turned around, he can definitely help us."

Parcells didn't talk to reporters, and the firings of Mueller and his two aides were announced in a two-paragraph news release. It was unclear whether Ireland, if hired, would take over before the April draft.

Turkoglu leads Magic past Bulls, 112-110

CHICAGO (AP)— Hedo Turkoglu hit a fadeaway jumper with seven-tenths of a second left in overtime, and the Orlando Magic beat the Chicago Bulls 112-110 Monday. The Bulls lost for the first time in three games since Jim Boylan became interim head coach following the firing of Scott Skiles.

After Chicago's Ben Gordon hit a tying 3 with 6.7 seconds left, Turkoglu made a shot over Ben Wallace. The Magic's fourth win a row was secure when Wallace missed from midcourt at the buzzer.

Dwight Howard had 17 points and 22 rebounds for Orlando. He also blocked five shots and made three steals, including a key swipe from Gordon late in the fourth quarter.

Turkoglu, who missed a shot in the closing seconds of the fourth quarter, finished with 17 points.

Gordon led Chicago with 39 points and Luol Deng added 19. Kirk Hinrich finished with 10 points and 10 assists before fouling out in the fourth quarter.

The Magic trailed 107-106 in overtime, but Jameer Nelson beat Chris Duhon for an easy layup with 26.9 seconds left. Keith Bogans made two free throws to put Orlando ahead 110-107.

Nelson scored 22 points and Rashard Lewis had 19. Carlos Arroyo and Bogans each had 14 for the Magic.

Orlando trailed 96-93 with 1:08 left in the fourth quarter before Nelson made one of two foul shots. Howard then stole the ball from Gordon, leading to two free throws by Nelson that made it 96-all with 36.5 seconds left.

Orlando Magic's Hedo Turkoglu, of Turkey, reacts after making a jump shot with 0.7 seconds remaining in overtime of an NBA basketball game against the Chicago Bulls on Monday, Dec. 31, 2007, in Chicago.
AP

After Gordon missed a shot with 13 seconds left, the Magic had a chance to win in regulation. Turkoglu missed in the lane and Howard also missed with a tip at the buzzer.

The Bulls led 55-48 at halftime behind Gordon's 15 points. Howard recorded his NBA-high 29th double-double by the break with 10 points and 13 rebounds.

Jazz 111, Trailblazers 101

At Salt Lake City, Portland's 13-game NBA winning streak came to end as the Trailblazers lost to Utah.

Andrei Kirilenko had 24 points, 8 rebounds and 7 assists for the Jazz.

The Trailblazers' previous loss had been on Dec. 2, and they was three victories away from tying the franchise record.

Portland coach Nate McMillan was attending a family funeral and not with the team to see the streak come to an end.

The Blazers couldn't overcome a cold stretch in the third quarter, going scoreless for almost 3 minutes and without a field goal for 4:34 as the Jazz pulled away.

Pistons 114, Bucks 69

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Detroit routed Milwaukee to record a ninth straight win.

Richard Hamilton scored 22 points and Chauncey Billups added 13 points and 12 assists for the Pistons.

The 45-point margin of defeat was the third-worst in Bucks history, trailing a pair of 48-point losses. The Pistons have a franchise-record 15 wins in December, while Milwaukee has lost four straight.

Bobcats 107, Pacers 103, OT

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Gerald Wallace led a furious comeback in the fourth quarter and took charge in overtime, finishing with 36 points and giving Charlotte a win over Indiana.

The Bobcats snapped a four-game losing streak by rallying from a 13-point deficit with under 6 minutes left in regulation, sending the Pacers to their fourth straight loss.

Wallace had two three-point plays late in regulation. He then hit two 3-pointers in overtime and four free throws in the final 22 seconds, finishing with 20 points in the fourth quarter and overtime combined.

Indiana lost for the sixth time after leading by double digits.

Warriors 112, Rockets 95

In Houston, Golden State overcame 21 turnovers to rally past Houston.

Baron Davis scored 23 points and Al Harrington had 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Warriors, who outscored Houston 37-15 in the final quarter to win for the 19th time in 26 games.

Golden State coach Don Nelson was ejected in the second quarter for arguing with the referee.

Raptors 97, Hornets 92

In New Orleans, Toronto rallied from a 10-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat New Orleans.

Chris Bosh scored 29 points for the Raptors.

The Hornets' winning streak ended at five after Chris Paul committed a turnover with just over a minute to go and then missed a pair of free throws that could have given New Orleans the lead with 25.8 seconds left.

It was a bitter end to an otherwise strong performance for the Hornets' star point guard, who finished with 23 points, 16 assists and seven rebounds.

Clippers 91, Timberwolves 82

In Los Angeles, Chris Kaman had 16 points and 16 rebounds to help Los Angeles rally to beat Minnesota.

The Clippers snapped a six-game losing streak and a seven-game home skid despite missing all 14 3-point attempts.

76ers 98, SuperSonics 90

In Seattle, Andre Iguodala scored 25 points to help Philadelphia beat an injury-depleted Seattle.

The Sonics played without their top two scorers, rookie guard Kevin Durant and Chris Wilcox.

Auburn beats Clemson 23-20 in overtime to win Chick-fil-A Bowl

ATLANTA (AP)— Auburn's freshman quarterback Kodi Burns threw for a touchdown and scored on a 7-yard run in overtime to lead Auburn to a 23-20 victory over Clemson in the Chick-fil-A Bowl on Monday.

After Mark Buchholz kicked a 25-yard field goal on Clemson's opening possession of overtime, Burns scored on a spinning run on a third-and-3 play.

Earlier, Auburn's starting quarterback, Brandon Cox, ran for a first down on a fourth-and-1 play from the 16 to keep Auburn's overtime possession alive.

Auburn denied Clemson its first 10-win season since 1990.

Oregon 56, South Florida 21

In El Paso, Texas, Jonathan Stewart set a Sun Bowl record with a career-high 253 yards rushing as Oregon downed South Florida.

Quarterback Justin Roper threw four touchdown passes in his first start for Oregon.

The Ducks scored 28 straight points in the third quarter to snap a four-game postseason losing streak. Oregon made it look easy against the Bulls in a matchup of teams that were ranked No. 2 during the season.

The Ducks won for the first time since losing quarterback Dennis Dixon to a knee injury in November, snapping a three-game losing streak even though they set a Sun Bowl record with 138 penalty yards.

South Florida, which reached No. 2 in the country in just its 11th season playing football, missed a chance to win 10 games for the first time.

Kentucky 35, Florida State 28

In Nashville, Tennessee, Andre Woodson threw four touchdown passes against a depleted Seminoles defense, and the Wildcats took out the Music City Bowl.

It was the first time Kentucky had ended back-to-back seasons with bowl wins since 1951-52.

Florida State was playing three dozen players short due to injuries and suspensions stemming from an academic cheating scandal.

Woodson capitalized on the missing depth and finished the season with 40 touchdown passes, breaking the nine-year-old school record.

Fresno State 40, Georgia Tech 28

In Boise, Idaho, Clifton Smith rushed for 152 yards and two touchdowns as Fresno State took out the Humanitarian Bowl.

AP

Auburn defensive back Matthew Motley, center, breaks up a pass intended for Clemson's Aaron Kelly, left, as Auburn's Eric Brock (33) closes in during the first quarter of the Chick-fil-A Bowl football game Monday, Dec. 31, 2007, in Atlanta.

Fresno State's offense was surprisingly unstoppable against a Yellow Jackets defense that was among the best in the Atlantic Coast Conference. After punting on its opening possession, the Bulldogs scored 27 straight points, taking a 34-14 lead midway through the third quarter.

Fresno State has won four of its past five bowl appearances, with all four wins coming against teams from the six conferences with automatic bids to the Bowl Championship Series.

California 42, Air Force 36

In Fort Worth, Texas, DeSean Jackson and Robert Jordan returned from their first-quarter benchings and caught touchdown passes to help California rally from a 21-point deficit and clinch the Armed Forces Bowl.

California, ranked No. 2 in the nation in October before losing six of seven games, managed to finish with its sixth straight winning season.

Jackson, Jordan and leading tackler Thomas DeCoud were held out of the starting lineup and didn't play the first quarter because of unspecified violations of team rules that occurred before the team got to Fort Worth for the bowl.

Air Force led 21-0 early in the second quarter before Jackson and Jordan even got on the field.

Air Force lost four-year starting quarterback Shaun Carney to serious right knee injury in the third quarter.

Oklahoma State 49, Indiana 33

In Tempe, Arizona, Zac Robinson threw three touchdown passes and ran for two more scores, leading Oklahoma State past Indiana in the Insight Bowl.

A sophomore making his 11th college start, Robinson completed 24 of 34 passes for 302 yards. He also threw an interception.

The Cowboys matched their season-high point total.

The loss capped an emotional year for the Hoosiers, whose coach Terry Hoeppner died in June.

Jones, Powell make headlines for different reasons in 2007

LONDON (AP)—Marion Jones and Asafa Powell were the biggest names in athletics in 2007—for very different reasons.

Jones admitted to doping and had all her medals, titles and results erased back to 2000, while Powell again broke the world record in the 100-meter sprint.

Jones admitted in court that she took performance-enhancing substances starting at around the time of the 2000 Sydney Olympics, where she won five medals—three gold and two bronze.

The American won gold in the 100, 200 and 1,600 relay in Sydney, and bronze in the long jump and 400 relay. But after long denying she ever had used performance-enhancing drugs, Jones said in October that she'd used the designer steroid "the clear" from September 2000 to July 2001.

"I have been dishonest, and you have the right to be angry with me," Jones said outside the courthouse after pleading guilty to lying to U.S. government investigators. "I have let (my family) down. I have let my country down, and I have let myself down."

The International Olympic Committee formally stripped her of her five medals earlier this month, wiping her name from the record books, and banned her from attending next year's Beijing Olympics in any capacity.

The International Association of Athletics Federations earlier erased all of Jones' results dating to September 2000, including her 200 gold medal and 100 silver at the 2001 world championships in Edmonton. The IAAF is also pursuing her for US$700,000 in prize money.

Jones was due back in court on Jan. 11 for sentencing.

On the track, Powell again failed to impress at the biggest meet of 2007, finishing a disappointing third in the 100 at the worlds in Osaka, Japan, behind athlete of the year Tyson Gay.

But two weeks after that race, Powell ran a blistering 9.74 seconds in a heat at a meet in Rieti, Italy—even though he eased up at the end. That was still 0.03 seconds faster than the 9.77 that he had run three times.

"Today I ran like I should have done at the worlds," Powell said at the meet on Sept. 9. "At Osaka I was too tense, I was thinking about the race and the time I had to set. Instead here I was relaxed."

Gay won both the 100 and 200 at the worlds and was also a part of the winning 400 relay team.

Bernard Lagat, now running for the United States, doubled at the worlds, winning both the 1,500 and the 5,000.

Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia, who had set several distance running records in his career, set another in the marathon on Sept. 30, running 2:04:26 in Berlin. His time beat the previous record by 29 seconds.

The woman's athlete of the year was Meseret Defar, who set the two-mile world record of 8:58.58 at the Van Damme Memorial on Sept. 14, smashing her own mark by almost 12 seconds.

The 23-year-old Defar also set world records in the 5,000 and the indoor 3,000 earlier in the season, and won the 5,000 at the worlds.

"I don't have words to describe how happy I am," Defar after getting her award from the IAAF. "This is very special for Ethiopian women. Those who struggle very hard and who don't have very many opportunities to achieve the highest levels of athletics. So I dedicate this award to them."

PARENTS

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Waikato tournament. She defeated Young in the semis, 7-5. 6-3, then continued with her giant killing ways by pulling off a 6-3, 6-1 upset win over the sixth-ranked Ella Barclay of Auckland.

Even Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association vice president and CNMI national team coach Jeff Race congratulated them for Thea's accomplishments.

"He [Race] said Thea's impressive game is good for the CNMI. It gives the CNMI excellent exposure and it shows that local tennis players here on Saipan can match the skills of those in New Zealand," Joy said, who also plays tennis.

Joy said she is also thankful for her teachers at Grace Christian Academy, who have understood and helpful whenever Thea travels to compete in off-island tournaments. "She maintains good grades at school and her teachers see how she works hard in everything that she do. May it be competing in tennis or school work."

"Her teachers often say that she is thinking maturely for her age. They are just offering her guidance with her school work," she added.

Joy said what makes Thea special is the dedication she has been showing on and off the court and the way she sets her goals.

"Last August she set a goal to make it into the Top 4 of the Oceania Closed and Oceania Junior tournaments so she can go and compete in New Zealand.

Now the rest is history.

ZAPANTA

From Page 26

Masters, and the PBA Bowler of the Year—and he won once and placed second in two of them. Also he had back-to-back 300 games (perfect game) on Sept. 23 and 24 this year. It's an exceptional feat that is very hard to accomplish even for the top bowlers in the world. Robert has also been the bowler with the highest average in almost all the leagues that he has participated. And he practically has led the SBA BRS (Bowling Ranking System) for the entire year."

Zapanta also heaped praises on the great years Raymond Angeles, Raymond Zapanta, Richard Leong, and Simon Manacop had in 2007.

"I also like to mention youth bowler Raymond Angeles who surprised everyone with his victory in the 2006 King of the Lanes in January 2007. His game has improved a lot this year as shown by his over 190 average in all his bowling leagues, and his BRS enabled him to qualify as one of the bowlers for the Asian Intercity Tournament," he said.

Zapanta also mentioned as noteworthy his son Raymond's performance in 2007. He said Raymond is the other bowler aside from Talavera to win two monthly King of the Lanes title this year. The younger Zapanta also won a high average award this year in one league with an average of over 200 pins per game.

"Leong I may add is the best left-handed bowler of 2007. He also won a monthly King of the Lanes title and has been among the top five bowlers in all the major tournaments this year. For most of the year, he had averages of 200 or better in most of his bowling leagues," said the elder Zapanta.

Manacop, for his part, had less time to bowl in leagues and compete in tournaments but he consistently placed among the top placers in tournaments and high average bowlers in the leagues, according to Zapanta.

"He has a monthly King of the Lanes title in 2007 and he has been a bowler for Saipan in the Asian Intercity tournament for the past several years."

The other very good bowlers who are probably just waiting for their breaks in the major tournaments, the SBA official said, are Raul Dumapit, Kitz Barja, Jon Eparwa, Alex Cacdac, Paul Pangelinan, Ador Dimaano, Danny Robles, Lito Teodoro, Jon Hensley, Rusty Musca, Roman Borja, and Percy Omechelang.

For the ladies, Zapanta selected Emi Williams based on her standing in the women's BRS as of November 2007.

He said the veteran lady kegler has won three of the monthly Queen of the Lanes title and is currently also the leader in the December roll-off.

"She has also been consistent in being among the top placers in most of the tournaments that we have this year and has been always among those in the women's high average category in the various leagues," he said.

Another very consistent bowler Zapanta mentioned is Ron Cal, who won the CNMI May Women's Masters and the PBA Classified Tournament in the Class B category. The classified tournament is a joint men-women tournasment.

For youth bowlers, Zapanta said the best for 2007 has been Jeremy Williams. He won three of the monthly Prince/Princes of the Lanes tournaments with averages of close to 200 pins.

"His averages in the tournament and leagues though will require him to move to the men's category next year. With the way he is bowling, he can be projected as one of the top bowlers in the CNMI in another couple of years," said Zapanta.

He said other promising youth bowlers who are multi-titled in the Monthly Prince and Princes of the Lanes were Zack Cruz, Jaime Vales, and Raphael Zapanta.

"These young bowlers have improved a lot this year and their league averages higher than a lot of adult bowlers."

SBA is a member of the Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association and has a membership of 170—129 men and 41 women.

CWGA

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This is the one thing that we are most proud of because none of the other golf clubs are under such system. With our USGA card we can join any official USGA tournament," she said. Babauta said CWGA's first big tournament is coming up in April. The competition will be a two-day tournament with trophies and prices afterwards.

Established in March 2007, CWGA is a nonprofit organization founded to promote, encourage, and introduce women to the sport of golf in the CNMI.

In elections held during the same month, Noriko Togawa was voted as president, Lou Kim as vice president, Aya Matsumoto as treasurer, Babauta as secretary, and Terry Tudela, Bobbie Guerrero, and Dolores Yamagishi acting as directors.

The organization intends to accomplish the following: 1. Promote civic and community interest in golf; 2. Establish and encourage competition and good sportsmanship; 3. Promote and provide social functions of the members and their families; 4. Promote youth golf activities; and 5. To do any or all things necessary and proper to accomplish its purpose and intention.

CWGA also commits its members to abide by a set of values that will further enrich a golfer's performance, attitude, and conduct—adopted form the USA Junior Golf Association.

The set of values members of CWGA are committed to faithfully are as follows: perseverance; sportsmanship; respect; honesty; judgment; responsibility; reliance; courtesy; and sincerity.

HANMI

From Page 26

then have APHI (1-1) taking on Saipan World Resort (0-1) starting at 6pm.

Two play dates have so far been consummated since the league kicked off last Dec. 2. The opener saw defending champion Aqua Resort Club rally to beat Hyatt Regency Saipan, 84-74. It was followed by Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc.'s 94-88 win over Hafadai Beach Hotel.

The next Sunday, Dec. 9, Aqua Resort made mincemeat of Hafadai, 113-82. It was followed by Pacific Islands Club debuting with an 83-60 win over Saipan World Resort. The third game, meanwhile, saw Hyatt bounce back with a 102-86 win over APHI.

The 2007-2008 season of the HANMI Cup is sponsored by Titans Chivas Life, Pacific Telecom, Inc., Coca-Cola Bottlers Micronesia, and Western Sales Trading Company.

Espino said each best player of the game has received a Chivas Life bag, PTI phone card, and gift pack courtesy of Coca-Cola.

The 2nd Annual HANMI Cup is organized by the Northern Marianas Bartenders Association with endorsement from the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands.

In the championship game of the inaugural season held last March 4, Aqua Resort had to sweat it out before completing a perfect season when forward Eric Dalangin scored on a prayer to allow the Achugao establishment to escape Hyatt Regency Saipan, 65-63.

For more information about the ongoing league involving the top names of the islands' hospitality industry, call Espino at 323-1135.

HONORABLE

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In both tournaments, almost 70 percent of the members joined with close to 80 players competing in the mixed team tournament.

Basketball champions

A number of teams hoisted championship trophies in 2007 after winning in their respective basketball tournaments they competed in.

Saipan had its own March Madness when it crowned four champions with Aqua Resort Club leading the cast after winning the Inaugural NMBA Inter-Hotel Basketball League HANMI Cup.

Aqua won the title thanks to Eric Dalangin's last-second shot that helped squeeze out a 65-63 decision against a hard-fighting Hyatt Regency Saipan.

Former national team member Ed Diaz, meanwhile, led Security Title-Office of the Public Auditor to the 2007 Inter-Government Basketball League crown after they beat Northern Marianas College-Proa, 2-1, in the best-of-three title series.

Youth teams G-Stars (boys' 16-and-under); G-Rollers (girls' 16-and-under); G-Rollers (14-and-under); and the San Antonio Sixers (12-and-under) won the pennant and championship titles in their respective divisions in the SaipanCell-NYBA 16-and-under Youth Basketball League.

Familiarity, meanwhile, helped Ulloa's win the 2007 SaipanCell 25-and-under Youth Basketball League crown, beating the Southern Sonics, 2-1, in their three-game series.

The Sonics also lost the 17th Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League title when they lost to a hungrier CNMI Junior Nationals in the finals, 91-98, last month.

OBITUARIES IN SPORTS

On a sad note, 2007 also saw the passing of 2006 CNMI Micronesian Games gold medal baseball team member Joe Guerrero, Oceania Softball Confederation developmental officer Andrew Purdon, and Marianas High School Lady Dolphins point guard Marlene "Shorty" Agbanlog.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	26	3	.897	_
Toronto	17	15	.531	10 1/2
New Jersey	14	16	.467	12 1/2
Philadelphia	14	17	.452	13
New York	8	21	.276	18

Southeast Division

Orlando	22	11	.667	_
Atlanta	15	13	.536	4 1/2
Washington	15	14	.517	5
Charlotte	11	18	.379	9
Miami	8	23	.258	13

Central Division

Detroit	24	7	.774	_
Indiana	15	17	.469	9 1/2
Cleveland	14	17	.452	10
Chicago	11	18	.379	12
Milwaukee	11	19	.367	12 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	21	8	.724	_
Dallas	20	11	.645	2
New Orleans	20	11	.645	2
Houston	15	16	.484	7
Memphis	8	22	.267	13 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	18	12	.600	_
Portland	18	13	.581	1/2
Utah	17	16	.515	2 1/2
Seattle	9	22	.290	9 1/2
Minnesota	4	26	.133	14

Pacific Division

Phoenix	22	9	.710	_
L.A. Lakers	19	11	.633	2 1/2
Golden State	19	13	.594	3 1/2
Sacramento	11	18	.379	10
L.A. Clippers	10	19	.345	11

Yesterday's Games

Orlando 112, Chicago 110, OT
Charlotte 107, Indiana 103, OT
Detroit 114, Milwaukee 69
Golden State 112, Houston 95
Utah 111, Portland 101
Toronto 97, New Orleans 92
L.A. Clippers 91, Minnesota 82
Philadelphia 98, Seattle 90

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Honorable mentions for Top Sports Stories of 2007

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR
and JON PEREZ
REPORTER

There were a dozen more stories deserving of the "Top Sports Stories of 2007," but the number of fingers on both hands was the limit, and besides the "Top 22 Sports Stories of the Year" just doesn't have the right ring to it.

Team No Ka Oi celebrated 2007 by winning seven tournaments on Saipan and in Guam. JON PEREZ

No Kao Oi is simply the best

Team No Ka Oi won titles left and right in 2007 sweeping the seven tournaments it joined.

No Ka Oi began the year by winning their fourth title in the 5th Annual Crime Stoppers Slow-pitch Softball Tournament last January by beating No Zone, 11-7, in the finals.

They also completed their dominance in the Saipan leg of the Marianas Miller Lite Cup in July then they represented Saipan in the Guam finals the following month and won their fifth straight title. No Ka Oi defeated Guam, 11-7, in the finals.

They also won the Budweiser King of the Diamonds and the SaipanCell/Palau Community Association of the CNMI Softball Tournament adding them to their collection of championship trophies.

They ended the year by winning the PIC Thanksgiving Softball Tournament in November.

Mieko magnificent in 2007

Mieko Carey gave her adopted islands two reasons to rejoice after going home triumphant in two triathlons she took part in last year.

Last July 15, Mieko and husband Kevin Carey represented the local Tagaman triathlon in the 27th Annual Kaike Triathlon Championships.

Although the race was shortened to a duathlon because of the storm threatening Japan's Tottori Prefecture, Mieko still finished 486th overall after negotiating the 8.3-km run, 74-km bike, and marathon in 8:22:35.

A couple of months later on Oct. 28, Mieko competed in the 2007 XTERRA World Championship at Wailea Maui, Hawaii and finished strong in her division.

Mieko came in fourth in the women's 25-29 division with a time of three hours, 44 minutes, and 41 seconds.

Harlem Ambassadors return

Lade Majic and the barnstorming Harlem Ambassadors exhibition basketball team returned to the CNMI last year after a six-year absence and wowed the crowd with their thunderous dunks, pinpoint passing, accurate 3-point marksmanship, and overall comedic flair.

The team arrived on Saipan on Nov. 30 and did two shows on Dec. 1 and 4 at the MHS gym. They also performed at the Tinian gym on Dec. 3. The Harlem Ambassadors also held several clinics to lucky Saipan youth cagers and played against two local teams where they showcased their trademark show basketball that delighted fans of all ages.

Gabriel gets his badge

It was another banner year for the Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands as local basketball referee Gabriel White finally got his FIBA referee's license allowing him to fulfill his long cherished dream of officiating in international competitions and even maybe the Olympics.

© RICH CRUSE/XTERRA
Mieko Carey runs in the "Spooky Forest" during last year's XTERRA World Championship in Maui, Hawaii. Carey was the only one from Saipan or Guam to compete in the event.

MARK RABAGO
Lade Majic and the barnstorming Harlem Ambassadors exhibition basketball team returned to the CNMI last year after a six-year absence.

White is one of just 27 people in the Oceania zone to hold the FIBA referee's license. Of the number, 20 hail from Australia, three from New Zealand, and four from Pacific Oceania.

MMA continues to explode in the scene

Mixed martial arts events were aplenty in 2007 where it helped train young and up-and-coming local warriors to bigger off-island fight events.

The past year was a banner year for MMA warriors and fans as they were treated to top caliber fights on Saipan and witnessed how the island warriors represented the CNMI in various off-island tournaments.

The community's year-long support helped local instructors produce great champions like Frank "The Crank" Camacho, Kelvin "The Big Hit" Fitial, Giovanni "Palaxi" Sablan, Jason "Rush" Tarkong, Slade "Rage" Adelbai, "Kill" Bill Saures, and Myron "The Natural" San Nicolas.

In most cases, the island warriors returned to the CNMI victorious like the case of Camacho in 2006 when he won the URCC light heavyweight championship belt. Camacho, however, lost to Caloy "Bad Boy" Baduria in his title defense last year.

Spearfishing on target

The sports of spearfishing continued to build on the success of the 2006 Micronesian Games—where the CNMI kept the gold on home soil—by holding an event last year and taking part on an off-island competition.

John Starmer and his crew beat long odds to win the Inaugural Spearfishing Tournament held from the lighthouse in Garapan to Agingan Point in San Antonio last May 12.

Felix Sasamoto, Moriko Asai, Frank Pangelinan, and Tony Robert, meanwhile, took part in the 2007 Marianas Spearfishing Challenge held in the water of Guam last Aug. 4. The two local teams finished inside the Top 10.

Off-island golfers make CNMI proud

R.J. Macaranas and Michael Kim gave their home islands something to feel proud about when the two golfers competed in the mainland in 2007.

Macaranas took part in the boys' 7-8 division of the 2007 Callaway Golf Junior Golf World Championship held at the Sycuan Resort in San Diego, California.

He bowed out of the competition, missing the cut by 15 strokes last July 18 despite improving his opening round 16-over par 74 score by four strokes by firing a 12-over par 70 in the second round.

Michael "Hee Beom" Kim, meanwhile, took part in the PGA Tour's Q-School Program held from Oct. 30 to Nov. 2 in Arizona.

The former CNMI national golfer, however, could not find the stroke that earned him a sixth-place finish in the Q-School's pre-qualifying tournament in September at Laquinta, California.

Kim shot an opening round of 74 then followed it up with a 73 and 71 before withdrawing in the final day to finish with a five-over par 218.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Local basketball referee Gabriel White finally got his FIBA referee's license last year. White is seen here conferring with a fellow referee during a break in the 2003 Suva South Pacific Games basketball competition in Fiji.

Chamorro Flying Proa Team crosses Channel

Last Aug. 7 six intrepid swimmers who trace their roots to this part of the world successfully crossed the English Channel.

The Chamorro Flying Proa Team, made up of Tim Cespedes, Fred Perez, Tricia Perez Peringer, Alison Perez, Pete Perez, and Emma Perez, completed the 21-mile journey from Dover, England to Wissant, France in a little over 13 hours.

Five days later on Aug. 12, Cespedes became the first Chamorro to swim solo across the English Channel when he completed the feat in 10 hours and 37 minutes.

Rocball is quarter of a century old

Rocball celebrated a milestone in 2007 as the year saw the islands' only indigenous sport add the 25th candle to its birthday cake.

Rocball was first written in Ebisu, Japan in 1979. The sport itself went through a two-year experimental period at Hopwood Junior High School from 1981 to 1983. Rocball started being played as a regular sporting activity in 1983.

"It was invented because I thought that the sport of volleyball didn't have what it took to get this kind of game out of the picnic activity mentality," said the sport's founder James Feger.

Saipan goes badminton-crazy

The Olympic sport of badminton continued its climb to become part of the island's regular program with the Northern Marianas Badminton Federation working overtime to start its grassroots development program.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The sports of spearfishing built on the success of the 2006 Micronesian Games by holding the Inaugural Spearfishing Tournament last May 12.

NMBF held two successful tournaments and its first youth clinic as part of the Division of Youth and Services-organized Summer Youth Sports Camp.

NMBF's membership is reaching close to 150 as evidenced by the participation in the Traders Insurance/PTI Cup last May and the Inaugural NMBF Mixed Team Competition by the end of the year.

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Honorable mentions for Top Sports Stories of 2007

There were a dozen more stories deserving of the "Top Sports Stories of 2007," but the number of fingers on both hands was the limit.

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Sports

Ravens fire head coach after 5-11 season

Brian Billick never came close to duplicating the success he enjoyed early in his career as head coach of the Baltimore Ravens, and it finally cost him his job.

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Parents proud of Thea's achievements

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

Almost a week after their daughter's triumphant return, Boyet and Joy Minor are still ecstatic over Thea's accomplishments in three separate tournaments in New Zealand as a member of the ITF-Oceania Junior touring team.

Joy, in a telephone interview, said they are both proud of how Thea carried herself against the top junior players from the Oceania. "We are very proud of her because even though we were not there to watch her games and cheer her on, she still managed to come out strong against her opponents."

Joy added being invited as a member of the ITF-Oceania Junior Touring Team was already an achievement for their daughter. "Winning in New Zealand is just a bonus."

The elder Minor said her daughter also showed mental toughness for the three weeks she stayed in New Zealand. "Despite traveling alone and without a personal coach she showed that she can handle herself well and knows how to adjust with the games of her opponents."

The 12-year-old Minor ended her New Zealand trip with a second-place finish in the 2007 Auckland Christmas Tennis Tournament where she lost to fellow ITF-Oceania Junior touring team member Tarani Kamoe of Fiji, 5-7, 2-6, in the finals.

She previously won the girls' 12-and-under singles crown in the Coca-Cola Waikato Junior Open 2007, then placed second in the 2007 Poverty Bay East Coast Ray White Christmas Junior Tennis Tournament losing to Kamoe in the finals. She also teamed up with Kamoe to grab the girls' 12-and-under doubles title.

"We were not expecting anything from her. We just told her to play her best and prove to us that she can compete on her own without us watching. We admired her with her wins, especially when she beat seeded players."

One of the seeded players she beat was Lucia Young, who was seeded seventh in the

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Thea Minor, left, joins ITF-Oceania Junior touring teammates Tarani Kamoe, center, and Annie Shannon in showing off their tournament certificates at Gisborne, New Zealand.

Zapanta hails top bowlers for 2007

Talavera

Angeles

Leong

Manacop

Zapanta

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

While the Saipan Bowling Association had a tough year in 2007, the hard economic times and troubles getting sponsors didn't prevent bowlers from performing to their optimum levels last year.

Asked who among the bowlers had the best year in 2007, SBA official Ross Zapanta went for the obvious choice—four-time perfect game Robert Talavera.

"Robert Talavera is the CNMI's best bowler for 2007. We (SBA and Philippine Bowling Association) have three major tournaments for the year—SBA King of the Lanes, CNMI

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HANMI Cup meeting tomorrow

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The 2nd Annual HANMI Cup Inter-Hotel Basketball League will hold an organizational meeting at 3pm tomorrow at the Saipan Grand Hotel's Aoi Restaurant.

League coordinator Lito Espino said the agenda for the meeting will revolve around the late entry of Aquarius Hotel and the finalization of the game schedule for the 2007-2008 season.

Aquarius Hotel's entry into the basketball competition raises the number of entrants for the season to seven teams.

The hotel's application was approved during a recent organizational meeting and the company needs to submit its team roster and entry fee in tomorrow's meeting.

Espino said the league, which took a four-week break for the holiday season, resumes this coming Sunday, Jan. 6, at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The first game beginning 3pm will pit Hafadai Beach Hotel (0-2) against newcomer Aquarius Hotel (0-0). It will be followed by the 4:30pm match between Hyatt Regency Saipan (1-1) and Pacific Islands Club (1-0). The final game of the scheduled tripleheader will

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CWGA: Bigger and betters things for 2008

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The CNMI Women's Golf Association has laid out its plans for 2008 and one of the objectives is to grow its membership during the incoming year, according to club secretary Lorraine Babauta.

"Our plans for 2008 are hopefully to encourage more ladies to join. Make it a more international-type of club. Right now, we have eight Japanese ladies, eight local ladies, and six Korean ladies. We want to see Filipinas and Caucasians to join, etc. We hope to make 2008 more competitive and exciting. Last year marked our first year and we are just establishing the ground rules and getting everyone familiar with the rules of golf," she said in an email to the *Saipan Tribune*.

As far as CWGA's biggest accomplishment in its founding year, Babauta said merely indoctrinating the women players about the intricacies of the USGA handicap was a great achievement enough for the club's first year of existence.

"Our biggest accomplishment was having all the members basically on the same playing field by the establishment of a USGA handicap with card.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The CNMI Women's Golf Association plans to grow its membership during the incoming year.